8

Conclusion

Haste still pays haste, and leisure answers leisure;
Like doth quit like, and Measure still for
Measure –

—*Measure for Measure*, V. i. 466–68

Conclusions demand recapitulation, interwoven with speculation: a bold patchwork rendering of the previous chapters, using their brightest threads, along with several unstitched filaments, tapering off into the distance. In what follows, I briefly summarise my argument. The rest of the chapter then asks whether my measure of rule of law reform gets the measure of other fields. I speculate about the extent to which my arguments about expert ignorance could travel beyond rule of law reform, for instance, to studies of governance more broadly, as well as the politics of the methods I have proposed to study expert ignorance. It is particularly speculative in moving from international development, to Brexit, to other domains concerned with governance and government. At the same time, the chapter pre-empts and limits expansive claims made thereon.

As a matter of form, you might then read the conclusion as a patent enactment of the movement between the receding horizon of open-ended possibility (here, through space and across fields), and its abrupt foreshortening through unstable efforts at closure or limitation. In the form of this chapter, then, you find an effort to underdetermine expert ignorance through patterned engagements with its boundlessness (and thus perhaps meaninglessness) and simultaneously with its situatedness: a performance of expert ignorance about expert ignorance, if you will.

8.1 Summary of the Argument

In this book, my immediate puzzle has been to understand rule of law reformers, their expertise, and its effects. This puzzle has three parts. Theoretically and methodologically, how can we observe and talk about rule of law reformers and their expertise? Analytically, how do rule of law

reformers not only make meaning of the rule of law but refuse it, too? And with what effects on the people, projects, and practices of rule of law reform? Politically, what are the consequences of these effects on the rule of law and for development practice writ large?

Theoretically and methodologically, I have argued that existing social theories of expert-driven global governance, and their attendant research methods, assume that rule of law reformers seek to make something meaningful out of the rule of law in a context. These theories and methods do not fully capture the operations and effects of reformers' persistent and constitutive refusal to make meaning out of the rule of law. As a result, these methods do not commit to understanding how ignorance might produce significant fluidity with respect to the space and time of reforms (including the boundaries between their inside and outside) and the identities of all involved (including their subjecthood and objecthood).

To grapple with and map this fluidity, I have instead fashioned a theoretical and methodological apparatus from aesthetic theory and performance analysis. This apparatus foregrounds the open-ended dimensions of reformers' ignorance work and focuses on the fuzzy shadows of the rule of law that reformers produce. The apparatus takes seriously the material and structural constraints on producing these fuzzy shadows, pointing to how the reform aesthetic or style is struggled over and disciplined. I have also argued in favour of focusing on and fictionalising personal experiences. This approach provides a stable yet non-determined vantage point from which to discuss reforms. This allows me to investigate expert ignorance while recognising its challenge to the possibility of an external perspective on it.

Analytically, I have argued that we should analyse rule of law experts as a people irreducibly embodying different styles of reform through which they reimagine their own subjecthood and objecthood, and those of others, as reform goes on. They express their styles through the combination of ignorance and implementation work they deploy, through which they try to divert future action in one way or another. As a result, we might imagine rule of law reformers collectively as actors in a performance, in a very real sense. They deconstruct and reimagine each other and their claims (as in *The Archbishop's Ceiling*,), and in doing so, they shape each other's identity and the spatio-temporality of the action on stage (as in the entanglement of Listener and Reader in *Ohio Impromptu*). Space, time, and identity are made fluid; reformers use implementation and ignorance work to shape how they might be made concrete in the future. The performance style that reformers develop

should be understood as an aesthetic form that they give to the institutional sublime that is the rule of law.

Politically, I have argued that the enduring fluidity of reform produces provisional instantiations of the rule of law – and I have placed particular emphasis on how reforms continue to renegotiate first-order matters around law's autonomy. In this light, we can understand efforts to shape and discipline a reformer's performance style – whether through a social movement, a profession proper, a network, and so on – as political interventions in how the rule of law is provisionally instantiated and law's autonomy is negotiated. We can also understand them as interventions in how rule of law reform relates to other domains of development – with political (or perhaps depoliticising) effects, as rule of law reform comes to be a process through which other domains articulate their political problematics.

In the next section, after a Brexit detour, I set out some possibilities for the broader applicability of expert ignorance, as well as some important limitations. In the final section, I reflect on the potential broader relevance of my theoretical and methodological moves. I draw out some affinities with recent work on novel forms of governance that are concerned with critiquing their own governance practices. My efforts to turn expert ignorance into an object of sociological critique may then provide a basis for productive future conversations with those concerned that 'the critical repertoire that legal scholars and other reformists bring to bear on contemporary governance practices might have become blunted and misdirected'.[1]

8.2 Taking the Measure of Expert Ignorance: From Rule of Law Reform to Governance?

> I had rather my
> brother die by the law than my son should be
> unlawfully born. But, O, how much is the good duke
> deceived in Angelo! If ever he return and I can
> speak to him, I will open my lips in vain, or
> discover his government.
>
> —*Measure for Measure*, III. i. 212–17.

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[1] Fleur Johns, 'State Changes: Prototypical Governance Figured and Prefigured', *Law and Critique* (2022), 18; Fleur Johns, 'From Planning to Prototypes: New Ways of Seeing Like a State', *The Modern Law Review*, 82:5 (2019), 833–63.

Are we to 'die by the law' or be 'unlawfully born'? Isabella's choice remains relevant today. Do we submit to the closure and determination of legal arrangements or seek to transcend them? And what to make of a world structured such that this choice is our lot? Some do not submit: the law (over)determines the world, reduces it to orderly patterns, and forecloses alternative imaginaries of the world to the one it asserts. The law is false consciousness; it is the supposedly neutral garb that clothes power and enables it to travel around the world. The law is violent. Scholarly work should recover contingencies and alternatives.

I have argued otherwise. '[Dying] by the law' can operate at two poles. One is determination and the consequent ordering of the world into legal subjects and objects. The other is underdetermination and the consequent disordering of subjects and objects in the world, as well as of their context. This is death by inchoateness, stimulated by the self-erasure of the expert (or in Duke Vincentio's case, the sovereign), denying their authority to make the law.

I have further argued that expert ignorance could be understood as a process by which people strive to determine, in Isabella's terms, the 'lawfulness' of their birth between these two poles. It is the implementation work that they conduct to assert a relationship between knowledge and action, which is subsequently undermined by ignorance work, whose path dependencies are in turn undermined by further ignorance work. Implementation work becomes fragile, conducted in the shadow of ignorance to shape – and defer, bracket, redefine, and keep in its infancy – the ongoing process of producing a legal order.

The politics of expert ignorance is thus not found in the legal or institutional position one chooses to adopt – whether a legal formalist like Angelo, a pragmatist like Escalus, or a moralist like Isabella. It is instead found in how one moves between the extremes of 'open[ing one's] lips in vain' (a futile subjecthood) and 'discovering … government' (an ordered objecthood, or submission to order). The performance of rule of law reform exemplifies this movement in strong form: these extremes are pronounced. It also contributes to structuring how this movement operates in other domains – shaping where and how these domains locate those poles (for example, agricultural economics might transplant political disorder or complexity into rule of law reform while keeping control over order).

In the absence of a sovereign lawgiver, the futility of opening one's lips, of calling out for order, is potentially totalising. 'Government', in Isabella's terms, is at best interim and subject to revision on the sovereign's return; yet the possibility that he might not return makes it worthwhile to open one's lips and participate in the project of self-governance. 'Government'

is always in a state of emergence, inchoateness, or being 'discover[ed]' (as the quote above from *Measure for Measure* would have it).

So, to 'government': what other phenomena beyond rule of law reform might 'lawful birth' through '[dying] by the law' accurately describe? We are already in a limited, if fuzzy, space suggested by 'government' – activities concerned with the relationship between institutions and rule. We are further limited in approaching government through persistent claims by one or another expert in rule that they do not know what government even means or stands for.

To explore the broader relevance of expert ignorance, while at the same time circumscribing its applicability, I dally with 'Brexit', the process that unfolded after the British people – or more specifically a majority of voters who turned up that day in 2016 – voted in a referendum to leave the European Union. My vantage point is personal reflection on the day of the vote and beyond; I move us between abstract and concrete, floating and emplaced, immediate and mediated. We also move to the Global North, suggesting 'resonances'[2] between the operations of expert ignorance in the North and South without discarding the distinction between the two.[3]

The vote and its afterlife have entailed political fights over first-order questions of law and government – where, whether, and how rules and regulations might be made on any matter of economic, political, and social life; the extent and nature of parliamentary sovereignty; the cohesiveness of the EU as a rules-based club.[4] Brexit could be understood as a project, predominantly from the right, to reimagine institutions. Indeed, this is exactly how some of its proponents portray it – the simplification of trade rules, a newfound institutional dynamism on the part of Britain to negotiate its own trade deals, and so on.[5]

The complexity of institutionally disentangling Britain from the EU formed an explicit part of the politics on both the 'Remain' and 'Leave'

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2 Anna Gibbs, 'Writing as Method: Attunement, Resonance, and Rhythm' in Britta Timm Knudsen and Carsten Stage (eds.), *Affective Methodologies: Developing Cultural Research Strategies for the Study of Affect* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

3 Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, 'Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America Is Evolving toward Africa', *Anthropological Forum*, 22:2 (2012), 113–31.

4 Reijer Hendrikse, 'Neo-Illiberalism', *Geoforum*, 95 (2018), 169–72; Maurizio Ferrera, 'The Stein Rokkan Lecture 2016 Mission Impossible? Reconciling Economic and Social Europe after the Euro Crisis and Brexit', *European Journal of Political Research*, 56:1 (2017), 3–22; Jamie Morgan, 'Brexit: Be Careful What You Wish For?', *Globalizations*, 14:1 (2017), 118–26.

5 Morgan, 'Brexit'; Dominic Cummings, 'How the Brexit Referendum Was Won', *The Spectator* (9 January 2017), https://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2017/01/dominic-cummings-brexit-referendum-won/, accessed 16 August 2022.

sides of the Brexit debate, both before and after the vote.[6] I suggest that Brexit can be understood as a way of giving form to a sense of sublime institutional complexity – for example, through aesthetic (and recrudescent nationalist) invocations of Britain's 'sovereignty' as a counterpoint to technocratic expertise. We might sum this formless object up in Prime Minister Theresa May's slogan, 'Brexit means Brexit'.

Indeed, some of the struggles over Brexit might be understood as ignorance work – repeated denials that any expert might know what caused Brexit, nor what to do about it and how to achieve it – coupled with contests over the right and provisional sort of implementation work – organising Brexit through legal agreements, political coalition-building, bureaucratic gear-crunching, trade- and market-based faith, and so on. And Brexit's form appears to me to be peculiarly expert: the avowed rejection of expertise that accompanied Brexit is coupled with the persistence of authoritative expert and legal structures that frame its unfolding.

8.3   Interlude: Brexit, Ignorans, and Ignorandum

On 24 June at 6 a.m. in London (and 1 a.m. for me, as I watched the news from my Harvard Square apartment), Britain Brexited. The British Broadcasting Corporation's images streamed onto my computer. Its chorus of the phlegmatic (in every sense), powdered, and balding pundits began the evening by reminding viewers that the vote would be close but that the most recent polling suggested a narrow win for those wanting to remain in the European Union. As the reality of what was happening emerged, chuckles were replaced by a tide of drily raised eyebrows.

One by one, studio guests – politicians, journalists, the odd financier, but heavyweights all – told us with great confidence that this result represented a revolt against the authority of elites like themselves. They invoked 'the people' – by which they seemed to mean poor, poorly educated, middle-aged, or elderly, white, working-class people. Nick Robinson, former BBC political editor, sombrely informed us that he had spoken with a pensioner on the way to the polls; she wanted to 'give the establishment a good kicking'. Emily Thornberry MP, grave-faced,

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[6] Adrian Pabst, 'Brexit, Post-Liberalism, and the Politics of Paradox', *Telos*, 176 (2016), 189–201; Hans Kundnani, 'Rather than Offer Clarity, Brexit Has Sown Confusion in Europe', *The Guardian* (21 August 2016), www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/aug/21/europe-leaders-response-brexit-vote, accessed 16 August 2022.

agreed. She had spoken to a plasterer. He told her how hard he had to work to make ends meet, all the while feeling the pressure of cheaper immigrant labour breathing down his neck.

The pundits told viewers that pensioners and plasterers (or at least a pensioner and a plasterer) were disenchanted with the status quo. They were crying out for self-government, a contraction of a globalised political space to which they had little connection. Will Straw, a well-groomed second-generation professional politician, earnestly informed viewers that this was a 'wake up call for political and economic elites'. He was then asked why these elites were 'still waiting to wake up when … voters have been telling [them] how they feel' for several years. There was a pregnant on-screen silence.

As the night progressed, participants in the studio faulted a specific type, or arrangement, of self-insulating elitism. David Dimbleby ('DD'), the host and long-standing (and -sitting) British political commentator, asked every guest whether this vote reflected a popular 'contempt for experts'. A peculiar ambivalence about expertise emerged in the face of this self-flagellation. Take the following exchange between Dimbleby and Steve Hilton ('SH', a Brexiteer and the then-Prime Minister's one-time spin doctor):

SH (explaining why he remained pro-Brexit despite the economic volatility it would bring): Look, none of us [pro- or anti-Brexit] really know what will happen. The figures that were thrown around during the campaign weren't real. I know because I used to do that stuff [when I was chief spin doctor]. Politicians might genuinely believe that someone would be worse off under Brexit, but they'd have to make it tangible for the voters. So they would come up with some figure, like £4,300 worse off, for which you could probably find some backing. The point is that the world today changes very quickly… if we [rather than the European Union] control the levers of economic power, we can manage the bumps along the road.

DD: So you are saying that the litany of experts is blathering away? If the figures are invented, what on earth do they spend their day doing?

SH: They believe them [i.e. the figures].

DD: So let's get rid of all of them [i.e. the experts]!

SH: No, no, they do very important jobs … [trails off]. But people are expressing a sense of real anger that they're not being heard.

This exchange reflected a pervasive sense of anxiety that emerged over the evening. There was anxiety from the different camps over the outcome of the vote, of course. But there were at least two other types of anxiety as well. One was over the relationship between politics and knowledge – or as one anti-Brexit MP said to Dimbleby, 'this was a post-truth vote'. Another was anxiety over the political status of experts – what authority did they have to define the present and predict the future? Is all that one could say that 'they do very important jobs'? This was most immediately

apparent in the status of experts parsing the referendum itself. Professor John Curtice, the in-studio polling guru, had produced a visual model of prospective voting patterns throughout the country – a giant electro-cardiogram projected against the wall, with staccato peaks and troughs. When asked by Dimbleby how his model was faring against the returns, he said, 'We never expected all our expectations to be met'.

This anxiety over the relationship between politics, knowledge, and experts contrasted two very different types of politics. They were stylised by Caroline Lucas MP when she called the referendum outcome the 'triumph of fear over facts'. Both pro- and anti-Brexit politicians spoke of the 'deep pain', 'fear', and 'anger' of 'the people', for whom 'gut and instinct trumped all the arguments about economic turmoil and warnings of economic collapse'. As such, viewers were presented with an incommensurable relationship between knowledge-based-cum-rational, and affective-cum-charismatic, governance. The nature of the entanglements between these two types of politics, and their attendant institutions, were supposedly laid bare by the seismic vote. These politics were no longer either mutually supportive or peacefully coexistent; instead, they were suddenly understood as always having been in conflict at best and in a relationship of domination at worst.

Towards the end of the broadcast, a pro-Brexit MP was asked what would happen first thing in the morning. Now freed from Brussels' shackles, the first step towards reasserting British sovereignty, she said, would be for lawyers to go through the tens of thousands of pages of EU regulations and decide which ones to keep and which ones to throw away. That legal task would be the first vindication of this popular revolt, their first piece of governance by 'gut and instinct'.

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In the moment, the importance of Brexit – from global to local, and in political, social, and economic spheres – could not, it seems, be overstated, no matter how hard those in the studio tried. The political editor of The Observer newspaper wove a Spinal Tap-estry,[7] calling it a 'nine, ten on the political Richter scale … does the scale go higher than a ten?' It was a 'generational' event, not to be mistaken for the ordinary oscillations of the political pendulum towards and away from mainstream consensus:

> For those of us in the business of reporting politics … most of the people, most of the time are barely paying the blindest bit of notice. And that is

[7] *This Is Spinal Tap*, film, directed by Rob Reiner. USA: MGM (Video & DVD), 2013.

rational. The stable transfer of power from one relatively centrist, relatively benign government to another doesn't rivet many … Every five years or so this normal is briefly shaken. A big political decision comes along, and a window opens; the conversations I spend my life having at Westminster become mainstream, as a decision is taken—and then the window slams shut again. But this is a moment far bigger than even that. Today really is different, the sort the next generation will be taught about after that module on the Tudors and Stuarts … [the vote's result is] washing away a generation's worth of assumptions.[8]

Expert governance seemed to have met the limits of its knowledge – a surplus of the world composed of people who 'had enough of experts'[9] and were lashing out against these unaccountable governors.

In a legal sense, we might think of the limits of knowledge, or the location of the ungovernable surplus, as being on one side of the divide between law and politics. Consider commentary from the other side of the Atlantic from Brexit:

An elaborate class of professional technicians has taken charge of … politics … These professionals, one could say, manage the passions or passivity of voters. They shape the content of what citizens know—and shape their ignorance too … Governing elites typically fault the people for their ignorance, and many discouraged citizens internalize the blame.[10]

[Donald Trump] is whatever he pleases to be at the moment, the only principle being the triumph of his will … [H]e is astoundingly ignorant of everything that to govern a powerful, complex, influential, and exceptional nation such as ours he would have to know … He doesn't know the Constitution, history, law, political philosophy, nuclear strategy, diplomacy, defense, economics beyond real estate.[11]

Teabonics: The most ridiculous—and misspelled—tea party protest signs.[12]

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[8] Chris Mason, 'Millions of Smiles and a Grieving Establishment', *BBC News* (25 June 2016), www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36627241, accessed 16 August 2022.

[9] As famously suggested by Michael Gove MP, a prominent Brexiteer. Henry Mance, 'Britain Has Had Enough of Experts, Says Gove', *Financial Times* (3 June 2016), www.ft.com/cms/s/0/3be49734-29cb-11e6-83e4-abc22d5d108c.html#axzz4HWjMu7A0, accessed 16 August 2022.

[10] William Greider, 'Bernie, Donald, and the Promise of Populism', *The Nation* (21 September 2015), www.thenation.com/article/bernie-donald-and-the-promise-of-populism/, accessed 16 August 2022.

[11] Mark Helprin in Symposium, 'Conservatives against Trump', *National Review Online* (21 January 2016), www.nationalreview.com/article/430126/donald-trump-conservatives-should-stand-against-him, accessed 16 August 2022.

[12] 'Teabonics: The Most Ridiculous – and Misspelled – Tea Party Protest Signs', *NY Daily News* (27 April 2022), www.nydailynews.com/news/national/teabonics-misspelled-language-protest-gallery-1.1918?pmSlide=1.15322, accessed 16 August 2022.

Institutions: for good and for ill, manager of passions of the people, bulwark against ignorance and the triumph of the will (as well as bad spelling).

The Brexit referendum meant that the 52 per cent of actual voters in favour of it could no longer be framed in law as different, aberrant, or stubbornly ungovernable. The outsiders had breached that bulwark. The destabilisation of expertise, the radical transformative potential of a moment, the possibility of new political and economic horizons beyond the globalised status quo that works for a cosmopolitan and mobile elite. This moment could be an opportunity to reveal the hidden workings of power, to open one's institutional imagination,[13] and to remake the world. Those erstwhile outsiders could seize the opportunity to redraw the lines between governance and chaos in their favour, determining where and how to draw them (along globalist or nativist lines, progressive or neo-liberal, and so on) and selecting the legal arrangements to enact them.

And yet. In the moment of populist victory, the pro-Brexit MP would begin with a legal analysis of tens of thousands of pages of EU regulations and decide which ones to keep and which ones to throw away. With all due respect to Dick the Butcher, they concluded that the first post-vote thing to do was to call all the lawyers. Another pro-Brexit MP suggested that she would go to the Bank of England to talk with its policymakers about the levers it had at its disposal to stabilise the market. As Martin Wolf presciently mentioned in the *Financial Times*, to enact the anti-establishment programme of leaving the EU, the Brexiteers would need an army of experts.[14]

More generally, win or lose, nobody seemed to know what was going on. The politicians and experts who paraded through the BBC's studio continued to invoke the voice of the poor, uneducated, white voter in their expert analysis of the results. They struggled to show themselves as 'tribunes of the people'[15] and talked about their newfound need to listen to the 'common man' – a stock character whose actual characteristics were anything but stock, his qualities shifting to meet anxieties projected onto him. Any efforts to assert knowledge of his concerns were met with a swift reminder that the speaker lived in a 'bubble' (delivered unironically by

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[13] Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *Democracy Realized: The Progressive Alternative* (Verso, 1998).

[14] Martin Wolf, 'Brexit Will Reconfigure the UK economy', *Financial Times* (24 June 2016), www.ft.com/cms/s/0/29a7964c-3953-11e6-9a05-82a9b15a8ee7.html, accessed 16 August 2022.

[15] Nick Clegg, 'Brexit: Cameron and Osborne Are to Blame for This Sorry Pass', *Financial Times* (24 June 2016), www.ft.com/cms/s/0/6044d4e8-3a03-11e6-a780-b48ed7b6126f.html, accessed 16 August 2022.

another denizen of the studio). The experts strove to reimagine their future relationship with that 'common man' – perhaps as humbled people who listened, or policymakers who would turn their gaze back to Britain and rededicate their energies to solving domestic problems. The experts laid claim to their ignorance and at the same time imagined the implementation of Brexit in legal terms, reasserting some divide between law and politics. The critical idea of institutional renovation – on the part of, and showing solidarity with, the ungovernable surplus (whoever they were) – was rapidly internalised and remobilised by the tribunes on the BBC to support some continuing project of governance, whatever it may look like.

And this project had stakes. By laying claim to their ignorance of Brexit in legal terms, the tribunes ensured their role in its implementation, in whatever manifestation, and whatever their prior commitments. As the *New York Times* noted in 2017, 'The Big "Brexit" Winners? Lobbyists and Lawyers'. It continued:

> [A] few hours after Britons voted last summer to leave the European Union, an official with a pro-'Brexit' group called an acquaintance on the Remain side to discuss what would come next. One thing led to another and, today, the two former opponents are partners in a consultancy, Hanbury Strategy…
>
> [L]awyers, trade experts, lobbyists and public relations firms are all lining up to coach businesses and the British government throughout what promises to be a complex, multiyear negotiation whose outcome remains uncertain.[16]

Indeed, in the years following the vote, Brexit remained stubbornly enigmatic. Even moments that seemingly represented an instance of resolution turned out to be anything but. The UK Supreme Court's 2019 ruling on an arcane procedural move by the executive – 'prorogation', or the suspension of parliament – was hailed by many as a triumph for the rule of law, or the judicialisation of politics.[17] But the underlying cause for the challenge was not executive fiat, but instead, a government trying to run out the clock to avert a legally enshrined Brexit deadline, to which the government would otherwise bind itself.[18] Similarly, a national election that

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[16] Stephen Castle, 'The Big "Brexit" Winners? Lobbyists and Lawyers', *The New York Times* (22 February 2017). www.nytimes.com/2017/02/22/world/europe/brexit-advice-consultants.html, accessed 16 August 2022.

[17] Martin Loughlin, 'The Case of Prorogation: The UK Constitutional Council's Ruling on Appeal from the Judgment of the Supreme Court', *Policy Exchange* (15 October 2019), https://policyexchange.org.uk/publication/the-case-of-prorogation/, accessed 16 August 2022.

[18] *R (Miller) v. The Prime Minister* [2019] 4 All ER 299; [2019] 3 WLR 589.

followed, won by the incumbent Prime Minister under the slogan 'Get Brexit Done', was fought around securing a mandate to negotiate a legal agreement with the EU, during a transition period, with a stated default position of trading under 'WTO rules'.

More generally, the innumerable proposals for Brexit have invariably remained in the conditional tense,[19] such as transitional arrangements, temporary waivers, and other legal forms, of contested content and lengths, for the drafting of reams of legislation and regulation.[20] Even the subsequent agreement between the EU and the United Kingdom, with various transition periods and legal backstops, has continued to kick various first-order questions down the road. Can the UK stay together as a union of nations? How to manage the tensions between taking Northern Ireland out of the EU and keeping its (legally guaranteed!) special relationship with the Republic of Ireland intact?[21] What of Scottish claims to continue its own independence process on the grounds that its people desire to remain in the EU? The only consensus seems to be around the idea that the status quo is 'chaos', and that 'something must be done', always.[22]

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One view of Brexit is concerned with trying to categorise the various pre- and post-Brexit attacks on experts as assaults on public reason, or bad-faith attempts by various chancers to further their political careers, institutional effects be damned.[23] The masses or the elites are derided or patronised as some mix of ignorant and malicious.[24] In this view, Brexit denotes an interim process –from which existing patterns of expert and political governance have been deliberately displaced, and in which political battle then takes place over some vision of future order for Britain and

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[19] David Allen Green, 'Five Steps for How Brexit Should Be Done', *Financial Times* (17 July 2017), http://blogs.ft.com/david-allen-green/2017/07/17/how-brexit-should-be-done/, accessed 16 August 2022.

[20] Kenneth A. Armstrong, 'Regulatory Alignment and Divergence after Brexit', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 25:8 (2018), 1099–117; Darren Harvey, 'Brexit and Covid-19', *King's Law Journal*, 32:1 (2021), 30–35.

[21] Jonathan Lis, 'Brexit Means Brexit: Theresa May's Slogan Was Truer than She Knew', *Prospect Magazine* (21 October 2021), www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/politics/brexit-means-brexit-theresa-mays-slogan-was-truer-than-she-knew, accessed 16 August 2022.

[22] Kundnani, 'Rather than Offer Clarity, Brexit Has Sown Confusion in Europe'.

[23] Comaroff and Comaroff, 'Theory from the South'.

[24] David Enoch, 'The Masses and the Elites: Political Philosophy for the Age of Brexit, Trump and Netanyahu', *Jurisprudence*, 8:1 (2017), 1–22; Mihaela Mihai, 'Foundational Moments, Representative Claims and the Ecology of Social Ignorance', *Political Studies* (2021), 1–21.

the EU (or what I have termed competing types of implementation work, such as legal, bureaucratic, or market-based).

I am arguing that we might also consider another view. This view is predicated on an argument that Brexit entails a range of ignorance work – establishing – an agreement that no-one (and certainly no expert) really knows the causes of Brexit, nor its consequences, nor what to do about it. In this view, Brexit itself is a political repository for a set of political anxieties over the sublime complexity of the consequences of the relationship between the European Union and Britain. All we know is the 'fundamental truth' that 'Brexit means Brexit', all these years on.[25]

In this view, Brexit takes on a particular form. The ignorance work of Brexit has been wide-ranging, from sociological claims that the masses know what Brexit might mean, to political self-critique by elites, adopting a humble mien in recognition that, whoever might know, it's not them.[26] Its implementation work has been much narrower – as suggested throughout this section, whatever was to be done, it would probably be legal and institutional. And so we see a range of legal patches, arranged not to give meaning to Brexit but to keep it unfolding over space and time – with legal experts at the centre of this process. Writing of the Brexit withdrawal agreement, one commentator notes that '[t]he UK government … negotiated and signed an agreement either without understanding it or not intending it to have effect'. So no one knows how to make it work … save through yet more legal effort, which raises yet another first-order issue, whether the constitutional status of Northern Ireland, or the government's obligations to follow international law.[27] If 'Brexit means Brexit' was 'a tautological phrase designed to buy … time to understand it',[28] Bell reminds us that law, and in particular public law, has occupied and stretched that time, turning Brexit into the perpetual 'postponement of non-agreement' by 'institutionalis[ing] strategic dissonance to square circles'.[29]

[25] Lis, 'Brexit Means Brexit'.

[26] Colin Copus, 'The Brexit Referendum: Testing the Support of Elites and Their Allies for Democracy; or, Racists, Bigots and Xenophobes, Oh My!', *British Politics*, 13:1 (2018), 90–104; Janan Ganesh, 'Liberal Self-Flagellation Always Assumes a Bleak Future', *Financial Times* (15 November 2016), www.ft.com/content/b26899a6-aa58-11e6-a0bb-97f42551dbf4, accessed 16 August 2022.

[27] David Allen Green, 'UK's New NI Protocol Legislation Is a Breach of Brexit Deal', *Al Jazeera* (14 June 2022), www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2022/6/14/uks-new-ni-protocol-legislation-is-a-clear-breach-of-brexit-deal, accessed 16 August 2022.

[28] Lis, 'Brexit Means Brexit'.

[29] Christine Bell, '"It's Law Jim, but Not as We Know It": The Public Law Techniques of Ungovernance', *Transnational Legal Theory*, 11:3 (2020), 323, 313.

8.4   Finding Expert Ignorance Elsewhere

Using 'expert ignorance' to explain everything from rule of law reform in the Global South to political dramas like Brexit in the Global North risks transforming it into a catch-all. One might be tempted to use the term to describe any moment of confusion, such as when a colleague talks at cross-purposes to you in a meeting, until you realise you held different underlying assumptions. Or when he abruptly shifts register 'from information to emotion'.[30] Or those patterns of wilful blindness by individual and collective experts that percolate over time into the structure of expertise, and society more broadly.[31] Or broader and more polemically still, it could be cabined into post-liberal politics, whether in or across the Global North and South over the last decade.[32]

Let me propose some horizons to expert ignorance through an example of the post-sovereign management of flows of people. Along with the highly complex ordering efforts to build a global architecture that regulates migration, recent studies have pointed to the importance of technologies that give form to and frame disorder or turn an ungovernable surplus of life into a manageable thing. These technologies do so without changing the prevailing system to incorporate that surplus. Stel, for example, studies informal Syrian and Palestinian settlements in South Lebanon. Against a backdrop where no one really knew whether someone was a refugee or not (the Lebanese government never registered them and in 2015 stopped the United Nations from doing so), a combination of international experts, state and local public authorities, and local camp committees continued to debate how best to classify and govern these settlements, while 'opt[ing] to keep things undecided and vague'.[33] Stel

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[30] Catherine M. Will, 'The Problem and the Productivity of Ignorance: Public Health Campaigns on Antibiotic Stewardship', *The Sociological Review*, 68:1 (2020), 71.

[31] Linsey McGoey, *The Unknowers: How Strategic Ignorance Rules the World* (Zed Books, 2019).

[32] I borrow the term from both Pabst and Finkenbusch: Pabst, 'Brexit, Post-Liberalism, and the Politics of Paradox'; Adrian Pabst, 'Postliberalism: The New Centre Ground of British Politics', *The Political Quarterly*, 88:3 (2017), 500–9; Peter Finkenbusch, '"Post-Liberal" Peacebuilding and the Crisis of International Authority', *Peacebuilding*, 4:3 (2016), 247–61. Both understand it as a post-*neo*-liberal mode of politics. For the former, it marks a rejection of neo-liberal managerial expertise. For the latter, it represents its culmination. As the book suggests, I find expert ignorance's power to be precisely in sustaining some degree of undecidability, which includes its own temporality – capable of taking form as historically continuous, or as a moment of historical rupture, as the occasion demands.

[33] Nora Stel, *Hybrid Political Order and the Politics of Uncertainty: Refugee Governance in Lebanon* (Routledge, 2021), p. 205.

points out that the first-order debate persisted, never to be resolved, which resulted in a series of provisional bureaucratic responses to matters such as entitlement to work and land rights. This provisionality, she argues, became a form of governance, keeping the governed politically invested in the first-order debate while leaving their institutional status – and political autonomy as a discrete group – ambiguous.[34]

Sociologically, I have indicated that 'expert ignorance' does not refer to a specific group of actors who can be pinpointed at any point, but instead describes a form of embodied expertise (in the example above, some combination of actors and their practices). Conceptually, I have set out some conditions for expert ignorance. It does not reflect the momentary or intermittent experience of someone denying their expertise. Those denials reflect a legitimate position within the particular structure of expertise and are constitutive of a particular iteration of that expertise (even if certain experts might not see themselves as ignorant) – here, the continued non-decision at every level over the nature and construction of the category of 'refugee'. Practically, I have argued that expert ignorance is necessarily composed of ignorance and implementation work – here, the admixture of 'keep[ing] things undecided and vague', and enduring efforts to classify and govern. In light of my historical sketch of the emergence of expert ignorance, we might further limit its applicability to institution-building and institutional reform projects. We might say that expert ignorance is a means of invoking an institutional sublime (for example, the impossible complexities of managing Palestinian settlements) and giving it form while respecting its sublimity.

This resembles what Andrew Lang and I have elsewhere called 'ungovernance' – institution-building practices that embrace the impossibility of their success (akin to ignorance work) while committing to their implementation (akin to implementation work). Others have drawn ungovernance into their analyses of diverse domains, including peace-building, state-building, and environmental governance.[35] As noted above,

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34 Nora Stel, 'Lebanese–Palestinian Governance Interaction in the Palestinian Gathering of Shabriha, South Lebanon – A Tentative Extension of the "Mediated State" from Africa to the Mediterranean', *Mediterranean Politics*, 20:1 (2015), 76–96; Nora Stel, 'Mediated Stateness as a Continuum: Exploring the Changing Governance Relations between the PLO and the Lebanese State', *Civil Wars*, 19:3 (2017), 348–76; Stel, *Hybrid Political Order and the Politics of Uncertainty*, pp. 30–85.

35 Jan Pospisil, 'The Ungovernance of Peace: Transitional Processes in Contemporary Conflictscapes', *Transnational Legal Theory*, 11:3 (2020), 329–52; Michelle Burgis-Kasthala, 'States of Failure? Ungovernance and the Project of State-Building in Palestine under the Oslo Regime*', *Transnational Legal Theory*, 11:3 (2020), 382–407; Stephen Humphreys, 'Ungoverning the Climate', *Transnational Legal Theory*, 11:3 (2020), 244–66.

Christine Bell has traced it through the public law practices around Brexit. Zina Miller has explored the effects on the transitional justice (TJ) field of what she calls the 'embedded ambivalence' of TJ experts towards transitional justice itself. This embedded ambivalence – a product of continual self-criticism, coupled with a will to action – 'can improve the enterprise, [but] it can also facilitate the evasion of foundational challenges'.[36] As she puts it, '[m]ajor critiques have been genuinely embraced as technologies of continuity rather than as instruments of destruction'.[37] And this '[r]epeated expansion raises questions about how and where to delimit the enterprise'.[38] This emphasis on the dynamics of expert self-denial, and its effects on the TJ field and its practices, shares an affinity with expert ignorance.

The analytical payoff of expert ignorance in other domains, then, might be to identify the forms of law or governance that emerge not out of an interstitial field, nor out of institutional fragmentation, but out of an ongoing movement between openness and closure, ignorance and implementation. This, in turn, points to the importance of analysing the relationship between the continual renegotiation of first-order questions (e.g., spatio-temporality, identity, the boundaries of the field or category in question) and the operations of that mode of governance – as well as efforts to shape that relationship, such as attempts to privilege legal implementation work in the Brexit context. In other words, "expert ignorance" allows us to reframe processes such as Brexit as a performance composed of ignorance and implementation work, and then to study sociologically any efforts to limit the relationship between those two types of work.

8.5   The Politics of Critical Method

It's all well and good to suggest more research on expert ignorance. Avenues for further inquiry are a hallmark of an academic book conclusion. But given the challenges of analysing and critiquing something as slippery as expert ignorance, what does it mean to take the measure of expert ignorance, and what are the politics of method for such an engagement?

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[36] Zinaida Miller, 'Embedded Ambivalence: Ungoverning Global Justice', *Transnational Legal Theory*, 11:3 (2020), 353–81.
[37] Miller, 'Embedded Ambivalence', p. 378.
[38] Miller, 'Embedded Ambivalence', p. 353.

I have argued that ignorance and implementation work encompass critical methods to a remarkable degree.[39] In the context of rule of law reform, we have seen how big-picture debates about structures, norms, and goals are in the frontstage of the day-to-day work in projects and workshops. Studies of what things like 'rule of law' mean emically are part and parcel of sociological ignorance work. And turns to middle-level theory are as often lambasted as lauded for bracketing the big and small pictures in a quest to move forwards and do something.[40]

This perhaps reflects an instance of a broader challenge: how to anchor a critique of reflexive and complex governance phenomena that relentlessly internalise critiques. Johns, for example, remarks on 'the extent to which global governance practices among states and international organisations have metabolised critiques frequently levelled at them, without any associated disturbance of legacy power'.[41] Such phenomena resist critical reinterpretation since, as Dan-Cohen puts it, they 'claim for themselves both the future of knowledge and the end of modernity, both the apotheosis of knowledge/power and its demise'.[42]

Other recent scholarship has grappled with this challenge. Take work on the role of big data in governance. In this telling, big data facilitates modes of governance that do not seek to rule by representing the world but by flattening it into a stream of data. This stream of data, produced by a 'sensorium' rather than a set of knowledge practices, is constantly rearranged through various means – for example, algorithms or artificial

[39] As Riles points out in her study of networked governance, scholars are enamoured of network forms, as those networks run themselves through a 'parody of social scientific analysis': Annelise Riles, *The Network Inside Out* (University of Michigan Press, 2001), p. 174. Scholars are networked, and their tools provide the network with procedures. Riles too imagines global governance as an aesthetic practice; this is her way out of the problem of the absent 'outside' of networked governance. In her telling, everyone contests the *forms* of the network – what its meetings, documents, and other artefacts *look* like. Forms are semi-autonomous to the network – something that network participants can understand as enough of an object around which they can congregate and about which they can contest and debate. I see the aesthetics of expert ignorance as more radical. Expert ignorance produces a radical negation, collapsing a form–content relationship. As a result, its internalisation of academic critique is not just procedural; it forms part of reformers' work.

[40] See, on either side of the rule of law reform debate, Deval Desai and Michael Woolcock, 'Experimental Justice Reform: Lessons from the World Bank and Beyond', *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 11 (2015), 155–74; Adrian di Giovanni, 'Parking the Debates: Law & Development in the Messy Middle of Public Law' (on file with author).

[41] Johns, 'State Changes', p. 2.

[42] Talia Dan-Cohen, 'Epistemic Artefacts: On the Uses of Complexity in Anthropology', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 23:2 (2017), 287.

intelligence – to produce and dissolve fleeting patterns and associations.[43] The governance effects of these associations then feed back into the system as part of the stream of data – meaning the system is already aware of and critically evaluating its own effects.

Van den Meerssche provides an example of the critical challenges this poses. He studies the use of artificial intelligence to identify risky migrants in the European Union's border control processes. As he explains,

> the use of algorithmic tools for patterning and prediction raises particular challenges for legal regulation and socio-political critique… [T]he key feature of the associative orders enacted at the 'virtual border' is the fact that people are not (solely and primarily) grouped on the basis of fixed criteria but, rather, through shifting lines of 'association, correlation and inference' (citation omitted). As a result, I have demonstrated, the standards of evaluation (the 'ordinal' norms) and the forms of affiliation (the 'nominal' orders) engendered by machine learning systems are fluid and mobile: they adapt and alter through their exposure to ever-unfolding passages and events.[44]

As a result, 'critique that focuses … on the "biased" representation of the subject and its classification according to pre-existing schemes' has limited purchase.[45]

Van den Meerssche's response is to trace the mundane workings of the algorithms in question, focusing on how they shape social relations through their continual adaptation: 'This elusiveness … should therefore not be seen as an impediment to critical engagement but, instead, as its object'.[46] Similarly, Johns identifies the following strategy:

> [I]t is down in the detail of particular practices, in the midst of mundane socio-technical work (including scholarly work), that developmental futures are being made, and remade. It is by observing and engaging assembly line personnel in the development project – … as diverse as they are – and understanding what they are doing and how, that we come to understand how we are seeing now, and what new blind spots we are cultivating and with what effects.[47]

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[43] Fleur Johns, 'Data, Detection, and the Redistribution of the Sensible in International Law', *American Journal of International Law*, 111:1 (2017), 57–103; Fleur Johns, 'Global Governance through the Pairing of List and Algorithm', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 34:1 (2016), 126–49.

[44] Dimitri Van Den Meerssche, 'Virtual Borders: International Law and the Elusive Inequalities of Algorithmic Association', *European Journal of International Law*, 33:1 (2022), 190–91.

[45] Van Den Meerssche, 'Virtual Borders', p. 192.

[46] Van Den Meerssche, 'Virtual Borders', p. 192.

[47] Johns, 'From Planning to Prototypes', p. 863.

These strategies share a sense that the complex and reflexive governance phenomena in question are fundamentally meaning-making ones. In the quote above, for example, Johns is concerned with the 'developmental futures … being made'. Similarly, Van Den Meerssche's machine-learning tools produce new forms of social meaning ('clusters' of data, for example) – and he is concerned with how to critique their transformative effects on social meaning broadly understood. (e.g., 'These ephemeral bonds of association … cannot sustain durable political projects of recalcitrance or solidarity'.)[48] Their responses, in turn, seek to understand how this meaning is made, pragmatically and materially. And critically, they might identify structures and patterns (à la Van Den Meerssche), uncover systematic blind spots (à la Johns), and think about distributive and power effects.[49]

Both critique and its object, then, are meaning-making exercises, whose boundaries are porous. This means that critical engagements can be anchored in a sociological inquiry into something that undergirds the process of meaning-making – such as a materialist sociology, or a sociology of infrastructures.[50] So we might read Van Den Meerssche and Gordon, who seek 'new pathways for a critical practice that is not safe and sanctimonious but that opens and leaves open' further enquiries into contemporary meaning-making.[51]

Here, my account of expert ignorance is in conversation with – and perhaps deepens or extends – these approaches. I have insisted on paying attention to how rule of law reform internalises and deploys critique for the purposes not only of producing adaptation, adjustment, and further meaning-making but also of the outright refusal to make meaning: no one knows what the rule of law is nor how to do it. Said differently, refusing or unmaking meaning has, in my telling, become part of the technical

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[48] Van Den Meerssche, 'Virtual Borders', p. 199.

[49] There are methodological and political affinities with Boltanski's efforts to provide an account of social critique, especially in a concern with complex and reflexive institutions and governance as particular and socially generative objects, and their commitment to finding critical openings amidst critical and pragmatic sociologies. Luc Boltanski, *On Critique: A Sociology of Emancipation*, 1st edition (Polity, 2011).

[50] Gavin Sullivan, 'Law, Technology, and Data-Driven Security: Infra-Legalities as Method Assemblage', *Journal of Law and Society* (2023, forthcoming), doi: abs/10.1111/jols.12352; Fleur Johns and Caroline Compton, 'Data Jurisdictions and Rival Regimes of Algorithmic Regulation', *Regulation & Governance*, 16:1 (2022), 63–84; Geoff Gordon, 'Engaging an Infrastructure of Time Production with International Law', *London Review of International Law*, 9:3 (2021), 319–49.

[51] Dimitri Van Den Meerssche and Geoff Gordon, 'Is This the Rhizome? Thinking Together with Fleur Johns', *Law and Critique* (2022, forthcoming), doi: 10.1007/s10978-022-09332-3.

apparatus of development, and perhaps in other governance projects. And this refusal of meaning is not cabined in a sociologically delimited field; it is a refusal to make meaning of the rule of law – perhaps governance – itself: to deny, with Duke Vincentio the possibility of governance is also to deny the possibility of meaning.

This, in turn, takes us to how expert ignorance underdetermines its own social conditions of possibility. Where for Latour, law's forms are somehow both superficial and yet remarkably durable over time,[52] and for Johns, rehistoricising a study of self-critical governance can offer critical purchase,[53] I have pointed to how rule of law reformers continually underdetermine both the temporality and history of rule of law reform.[54] I have made similar arguments about how expert ignorance underdetermines space and identity.

Instead, I have approached expert ignorance as a type of theatre or performance, in which the bodies of reformers have inscribed upon them fundamental tensions between meaning and its absence, embodiment, and disembodiment. I have done so with two goals: to capture the effects of the refusal of meaning (in a humanistic vein), while also keeping open space to sociologise aspects of that refusal owing to its location within a broader system of governance (in a social-scientific vein). To do this, I have mapped the action of reform from a participatory vantage point. Here, the scholar can be fully a subject or an object within the action – something which ethnomethodologists gesture towards but cannot consummate, remaining fixed instead on the precise nature of the researcher's entanglement with her object of research as both strive to make meaning out of the action they experience.[55] In other words, one possible alternative critical avenue, to which I have gestured in this manuscript, is to embrace the aesthetic quality of expert ignorance, and to study the efforts to discipline reformers' styles of performance – for example, studying PDIA in those terms.

[52] Bruno Latour, *An inquiry into Modes of Existence*, tr. Catherine Porter (Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 360–62.

[53] Johns, 'State Changes', pp. 11–13.

[54] Similarly, Vos tracks the multiple, incommensurable 'beginnings' that EU experts and policymakers narrated about a militarised EU migration control initiative called Operation Sophia. Vos brackets the question of the strategic use of these multiple beginnings, and asks what they tell us about the Operation and its dramatis personae: Renske Nina Vos, 'Europe and the Sea of Stories: Operation Sophia in Four Absences' (PhD Thesis, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2021), 95–114.

[55] Harold Garfinkel, 'Ethnomethodology's Program', *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 59:1 (1996), 5–21; Anne Rawls, 'Harold Garfinkel' in George Ritzer (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Major Contemporary Social Theorists* (John Wiley & Sons, 2003), pp. 122–53.

Informed dramatic fiction here offers a stable-ish platform from which to enact such endeavours: after all, such fictions reveal 'life itself', as well as the struggles over 'certain pattern[s] of play' through which we seek to understand and shape life.[56] For example, in the manuscript, I have used the device of several unreliable narrators. This is in an effort to suspend the question of a rule of law reformer's intent, avoiding a set of empirical inquiries into that question without dismissing its importance.[57]

This sort of genre work should not be imagined as a curio at the end of a shelf containing empirically 'serious' social-scientific work.[58] Fictional accounts of reform that emerge from a deep engagement with expert ignorance are in fact already a mode of pedagogy and self-critique used by reformers themselves. For example, in 2015, the OECD produced a practitioner's notebook on governance reform – a set of insights from leading theorists and practitioners written in a manner accessible to reformers.[59] It is an account of the travails of 'Lucy', a governance reformer in her third year of service with a medium-sized donor government. She is being sent to a country at risk of violent conflict for two weeks to establish the broad parameters of a governance-reform programme. She receives a briefing packet from three senior governance colleagues. They attempt to transmit to her an inheritance of ignorance, or a sensibility of pervasive reflexive scepticism about her work. They urge her to remember that '[w]hatever analysis you did, you won't understand the context the way you want to'.[60] Furthermore, 'exactly how you get good institutions remains opaque, contested and often a question of ideological taste'.[61] Indeed, the 'real skill for the governance practitioner is to recognise what is going to happen on its own terms… Don't measure institutions by the artificial yardsticks of our own idealised models'.[62]

Lucy and her experiences are fictional. She is 'the central character' of the OECD-DAC's governance practitioner's notebook.[63] The editors of

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[56] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 7.

[57] Linsey McGoey, 'The Logic of Strategic Ignorance', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 63:3 (2012), 533–76.

[58] Malcolm Ashmore, *The Reflexive Thesis: Wrighting Sociology of Scientific Knowledge* (University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 51, 66, 74–76.

[59] Alan Whaites et al. (eds.), *A Governance Practitioner's Notebook: Alternative Ideas and Approaches* (OECD, 2015).

[60] Alan Whaites, 'Memo to Lucy' in Whaites et al. (eds.), *A Governance Practitioner's Notebook*, p. 24.

[61] Whaites, 'Memo to Lucy', p. 19.

[62] Whaites, 'Memo to Lucy', p. 24.

[63] Whaites et al. (eds.), *A Governance Practitioner's* Notebook, p. 333.

the notebook do not attempt to hide their artifice ('[t]his publication is unusual', they tell us at the very beginning).[64] They have quite deliberately eschewed an analytic register. The OECD

> traditionally produced evaluations, guidance documents and summaries of 'good practice'. We are, however, at an interesting time in the evolution of thinking on governance practice – for reasons that we hope become clear in the document itself. This publication takes a rather different approach by articulating the thoughts, aspirations and concerns of a newly inducted governance adviser employed by a fictitious development agency. Rather than offer any definitive answers, it tries to stimulate ideas and thinking.[65]

As the italicised section suggests, the text is self-exemplifying. Lucy is not just a means of emplacing the reader; she is the most effective way for the notebook's editors to produce the style they seek to explain: the notebook is 'informal, and intentionally non-definitive – there is no simple right or wrong answer. But while being intentionally informal, perhaps even self-critical, this book does not underestimate the importance of governance work, nor the difficulties facing governance practitioners within aid agencies'.[66] The editors thus stage ignorance work, implementation work, and ways of disciplining the two (invoking the strictures of 'aid agencies' and the open-ended support of fragile 'networks' of like-minded reformers).[67] Lucy is a stage on which her sensibility can play out.

This suggests a different mode of critical engagement – one in which scholars grapple with the aesthetics of reform through informed, fictionalised accounts that they imagine in action and not just on the page. As with any fiction, these fictions require time and character development; they might be more or less informed by real experience, and more or less fictionalised as the circumstances demand (this diversity is reflected in my chapters on the project and the workshop). In other words, the work stands on the quality and genre of its fiction.

As I have noted, fictionalised accounts are already being used by ignorant experts to intervene in their own social organisation. I am arguing that scholars might want to use fictionalised accounts for the same purpose. The aesthetics of scholars' fictions might operate as a political intervention into expert ignorance. In the final analysis, critical engagement with expert ignorance does not entail pointing out its illegitimacy or

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[64] Graham Teskey and David Yang, 'Foreword' in Whaites et al. (eds.), *A Governance Practitioner's Notebook*, p. 3.
[65] Teskey and Yang, 'Foreword', p. 3 (emphasis added).
[66] Whaites et al. (eds.), *A Governance Practitioner's Notebook*, p. 15.
[67] Teskey and Yang, 'Foreword', pp. 3–4.

stimulating a crisis within it – for that is what ignorant experts themselves do. Rather, it entails the aesthetic and social work of engaging with and reshaping the social organisation of ignorant experts.

We might do well to heed the counsel of Duke Vincentio that disruptive aesthete of power, and remember that, in a world of expert ignorance,

> the time may have all shadow and
> silence in it; and the place answer to
> convenience.
>
> —*Measure for Measure*, III. i. 273–75.

Scholars might be those, then, who inhabit the same shadows and silences and lurk in these same dark corners as these new, ignorant Dukes, to 'stage [them] to [our] eyes' (I. i. 74).