This paper develops an argument that certain cultural activity during the Northern Irish conflict was central to the conditions of possibility of the eventual political settlement. This argument is developed through a case study examination of the activities of the Field Day theatre company and its intellectual opponents. At a time when institutional politics was stultified and ineffectual, and when much ‘culture’ chose to ‘rise above’ the conflict, Field Day, through a self-conscious post-colonial ‘affective turn’ (the exploration of the sense of belonging) and an associated refusal to regard culture and politics as separable, became an archetype of attempts to artistically and intellectually embrace and yet transcend conflict issues. Contestation by intellectual opponents had the paradoxical effect of productively complexifying the imaginative terrain on questions of national, ethnic and political identity. The parallel political effect rendered possible was the re-conceptualization of what seemed the core and ineluctable constitutional question of British or Irish sovereignty, into the pragmatic question of what was constitutionally sufficient (both practically and symbolically) to allow people to feel either Irish or British in the same socio-political space. The wider argument generated from this local example is that the issues of cultural expression, as the matter of putting form to affect, must be central to transitional justice concerns. This is tied to the idea that transitional justice scholarship can somewhat avoid sterile oppositions between law-centred or interdisciplinary work by embracing the productive complication brought by a fulsome conceptualization of affective dimensions of justice that cut across and beyond politics and law.
Chapter 1

Fields of Opportunity: Cultural Invention and ‘The New Northern Ireland’

Eugene McNamee

If ever a time and place called out for the solace and rigour and passionate rejoinder of great drama, it is here and now. There is a whole culture to be achieved. The politicians, visionless almost to a man, are withdrawing into their sectarian stockades. It falls to the artists to construct a working model of wholeness by which this society can begin to hold up its head in the world…

Introduction

Culture these days, in the instability of the distinction between culture as life and culture as art, seems to be everywhere and nowhere. This instability of meaning dictates that ‘culture’ is often at its most resonant when, as in the quote above, it is

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2 Homi Bhabha in the opening lines of The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994) puts the point in the following terms: ‘It is the trope of our times to locate the question of culture in the realm of the beyond.’

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E. McNamee

Head of Law School, University of Ulster, Jordanstown Campus, Belfast BT37 0QB, UK
e-mail: E.McNamee@ulster.ac.uk
‘to be achieved’. In Northern Ireland, as the recent ‘flag’ protests demonstrate, even fifteen years after a constitutional settlement was supposed to have settled such matters through institutionalizing the idea of ‘parity of esteem’ for unionist and nationalist cultural traditions; the institutional language has not fully taken root, and there is still much ‘to be achieved’. And if the current mobilization of many thousands of protestors in the purported defence of ‘culture’ (in the shape of the flying of the Union flag) might seem on one level a cause for celebration in that it marks an explosion of energy and colour from a Unionist working class quarter that had seemingly lost its political voice, the attendant violence and the fact that defending one culture seems to imply denigrating another marks a troubling unsustainability: this is not culture that can be endured. The question re-emerges of the viability of current political arrangements and of the ongoing ‘Peace Process’, as this ‘cultural’ backlash sets in. This essay, by turning back to the high point of the conflict in Northern Ireland and tracing certain elements of the cultural interventions (where ‘culture’ bears a different but related meaning) from that point forward, argues a reversal of a certain priority in the standard literature, which would have the political units (institutional and legal) as the leading edge of conflict transformation. In this reading, cultural shifts (in this context meaning the opening up of certain imaginative possibilities which resonated with emotional sensibility and which regarded the re-working of questions of national identity and belonging) provided the conditions of possibility for political change. In other words that, as in the opening quote, the artists (here the focus is on literary artists and critics surrounding the Field Day group) did indeed provide a ‘working model of wholeness’ that opened up a political space.

This speaks to current debates on the nature and limits of transitional justice as a field of scholarship, in particular to the necessary centrality (or not) of law (both

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3 For a situated discussion which complexifies the usual bi-lateral ‘two cultures’ analysis of the Northern Ireland social situation see Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd, The Dynamics of Conflict in Northern Ireland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

4 Prompted by the decision to remove the Union (UK) flag from flying above Belfast City Hall on all but certain designated occasions (a decision made by the city councilors on the grounds of promoting ‘inclusivity’ of different traditions) street protests and riots, in the name of ‘defending our culture’ have continued around Northern Ireland for two weeks at the time of writing; 18th December, 2012.

5 The ‘flag protests’ have been dealt with at great length in various local and national newspapers, in particular the daily Belfast Telegraph (which maintains a general online archive of its journalism) http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/


7 For a related argument specifically focused on poetry and biopolitics see Eugene McNamee, “The Government of the Tongue”, Law and Literature 14.3 (2002); 427–461.
in terms of legal analysis and of normative proposition). Likewise, it contributes to debate on the value of bringing to bear forms of literary analysis (comfortable with questions linking texts and affect) when considering ‘justice’ within a paradigm such as transitional justice that is self-consciously transformative (and therefore necessarily fluid in its meaning structure). This in turn sheds light on questions about the generalizability of local solutions that, in this analysis, would require consideration as matters of both transition and translation.

Structurally, the essay begins with Field Day and the ideas it promoted; moves to its enriching encounters with certain intellectual antagonists (notably prominent critic Edna Longley) and argues that in this productive antagonism were generated certain rich ideas which took root in the political soil. The essay then ponders the question of how such riches were partly squandered in Northern Ireland in the translation of cultural ideas into pragmatic political programmes and professional ‘post-conflict’ scholarship. There follows a related reflection on ‘the state of the field’ of transitional justice scholarship, focused on the eponymous article by Professor Christine Bell, wherein she ponders the dynamics and culture of the field of transitional justice, and the degree to which it might be shaped. This step allows for the locally generated arguments from the Northern Irish case to be linked to a level of general theoretical application.


9 The notion of necessary circularity in transitional justice is phrased as follows by Ruti Teitel in her seminal text Transitional Justice Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000 p6: ‘In its ordinary social function, law provides order and stability, but in extraordinary periods of political upheaval, law maintains order even as it enables transformation… law is alternately constituted by and constitutive of, the transition’. For insightful comment on literary justice see Siphiwe Dube, “Transitional Justice beyond the Normative: towards a literary theory of political transitions”, IJTJ, 2011.

10 See note 8 above, particularly Theidon’s editorial and the collection of articles in that issue of IJTJ. See also Hovil and Okello editorial, and Forsythe, “Transitional Justice: the quest for theory to inform policy”.

1 Fields of Opportunity
Field Day and the ‘Fifth Province of the Imagination’

The origins of the Field Day project can be dated precisely to the 1979 meeting of minds between the young actor Stephen Rea and the internationally renowned playwright Brian Friel that they should form a theatre company to produce radical social change through cultural intervention.11 There was and remains a strong Irish tradition of culture-as-politics that could ground such apparent immodesty. The ‘Celtic Revival’ movement, for example, promulgated by Yeats and Lady Gregory in the early nineteenth century, centred around Dublin’s Abbey Theatre, is recognized as key to the upsurge in Irish nationalist sentiment that culminated in the 1916, ‘rising’ against the British rule, the war of independence, and the eventual foundation of the Irish state in 1922.12 Joyce, while often parodying such nationalist sentiment, did not shy from the idea of the artist as central to the creation of a public consciousness. Through his alter ego Stephen Dedalus in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, he claimed as his own task that of ‘forging in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race’. Paul Muldoon, in his review of the canon of Irish literature, identifies this urge to public pronouncement (and the related condition of a quite disproportionate sense of his or her own importance) as a defining feature of Irish writers, given the role of the Irish writer as it has evolved over the centuries.13

If the ‘Celtic Twilight’ revivalism of Yeats and Lady Gregory had sought inspiration in the heroic ancient myths of Ireland, and Joyce had mythologized the everyday, the Field Day inheritors of the culture-as-politics mantle were far from such notions in the wellspring of their creativity.14 Field Day’s eventual body of

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11 ‘Field Day’ is in part a pun on the surnames of Friel and Rea; for an account of the foundation of Field Day see Richtarik Acting Between the Lines, 10. Friel, through such plays as Philadelphia Here I Come, Faith Healer and Aristocrats had, by the time of Field Day, already earned a reputation as ‘The Irish Chekhov’. For discussion of his career see Scott Boltwood Brian Friel, Ireland, and The North (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007).


14 For an interesting analysis of Yeats’ Modernism and his vision of Irish exceptionalism in this regard (ie; remaining essentially uncorrupted and pre-Modern) see Dwan, The Great Community. In the introduction to Our Irish Theatre (London: Capricorn, 1965) an essay written in 1913 reviewing the early progress of Yeats’ and Gregory’s project of a national theatre, Lady Gregory recalls the initial mission statement; ‘We propose to have performed in Dublin in the spring of every year certain Celtic and Irish plays, which whatever their degree of excellence will be written with a high ambition, and so build up a Celtic and Irish school of dramatic literature. We hope to find in Ireland an uncorrupted and imaginative audience trained to listen by its passion for oratory, and believe that our desire to bring upon the stage the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland will ensure for us a tolerant welcome…’.
work indicates that they had drawn from Yeats but had also processed the cultural
weight of the anti-heroic post-Yeatsian traditions of Joyce and Beckett, not to
mention the leavening of such weighty (and urban) fare with the more irreverent
and folkloric touches of Flann O’Brien and Patrick Kavanagh. The result was the
accumulation of a kind of fractured ironic distance from the Yeatsian cultural
nationalist paradigm, and even from the anti-Yeatsian Modernism of Joyce. Friel
can be identified as the guiding light of the Field Day creative project, and there
was in his work no quest for rediscovery of a glorious past as a model of aspiration
nor indeed a Joycean turn to the everyday as epic, but rather a more prosaic and
elegiac recognition of the emotional realities of the human condition as fallen and
‘astray’ in the world, with a gravitational pull to the sensations and emotions of
home and hearth. Already lauded as ‘The Irish Chekhov’ before his association
with Field Day because of his focus on emotional subtleties generated in everyday
interactions, for Friel, the route to national re-invention was now, in his Field Day
work, re-figured as passing through forms of self-recognition on the local level
with cross-cutting universalist themes. As he put it, ‘we are talking with ourselves
as we must, and if we are overheard in America, or England, so much the better.’
Self-recognition was, in other words, not to be predicated on aiming for a
somehow truer, better, higher self, but on the recognition of an emotionally
authentic, at-home self.

By the time of the staging of Field Day’s first play, the originators of the theatre
company had been joined, at their invitation, by several other board members:
Seamus Heaney, Tom Paulin (both poets), David Hammond (a producer with BBC
Northern Ireland) and Seamus Deane. If the most famous of the Directors was
Seamus Heaney, then Deane (an old schoolmate of Heaney’s) was to become the

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15 See Richtarik, Acting Between the Lines. See also Richard Kirkland, Literature and Culture in
‘Nothing Left but the Sense of Exhaustion: Field-Day and Counter-hegemony’. See further
Kiberd Inventing Ireland, especially section 11 ‘Recovery and Renewal’.

16 For discussions on Irish writing and ironic distance see Seamus Heaney, The Place of Writing,
(Atlanta: Emory University Scholars Press, 1989).

17 The proximity (and links) of Friel’s writing to Heideggerean linguistic and ontological
philosophy is explored in Richard Kearney Transitions (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1988) Chap. 6
‘The language plays of Brian Friel’.

18 Richtarik, Acting Between the Lines, 12. Interesting cross-themes of homeliness could be
drawn out from works on transitional justice from below; see, for example, Ciaran McEvoy and
Lorna McGregor, Transitional Justice from Below: grass-roots activism and the struggle for
change (Oxford: Hart, 2008); McEvoy “Beyond Legalism”.

19 Various writers have noted the links between the ideas expressed in Friel’s ‘Translations’ and
the work of George Steiner, particularly in After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation
(Oxford: OUP, 1975). See, for example, Helen Lojek “Brian Friel’s Plays and George Steiner’s
Linguistics: Translating the Irish”, Contemporary Literature 35.1(1994); 83–99, Francis C.
McGrath “Irish Babel: Brian Friel’s ‘Translations’ and George Steiner’s ‘After Babel’
most influential in the eventual development of Field Day. Deane, a sometime poet, critic and academic was, in all of these roles, a steadfast adherent to the notion of post-colonial theory as a prism through which to read the Irish situation, and this became gradually identified as a general Field Day position. The Marxian influenced economic analyses married to the emphasis placed on the colonization of consciousness which could account for seemingly free peoples’ self-destructively aping the manners of the colonizer was for Deane the key to unlocking the variant mysteries of the dysfunctional territories in both the north and the south of Ireland (the north convulsed in fratricidal violence, and the south socially atrophied at the knee of the Catholic Church). The particular extremities of the turmoil in the North were seen as the sharpest expression of the general condition of all-island post-colonial malaise. For Deane, there was no question but that interventions through cultural forms, particularly the theatre which had already served it’s apprenticeship as the flag-carrier of the Yeatsian Celtic Revival, were directly political because culture itself, in both narrative and formal terms, was irreducibly political. Thus, Deane served as a catalyst to the production and dissemination, through manifold essays and articles, of much more explicit expressions of what Field Day was trying to do, and eventually he became recognized as the person most willing to articulate a Field Day line.

The first play staged by Field Day was Friel’s ‘Translations’ which premiered in Derry/Londonderry in 1980. This play has come to be regarded as the prime exemplar of a whole series of ideas of what the company stood for, and in this light invites scrutiny in some depth. In ‘Translations’ the action is set against the background of the mapping of a part of Ireland by the Ordnance Survey team in the 1830s. The mapping exercise, undertaken in part by military personnel (hence,

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20 Heaney was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1995 (for ‘works of lyrical beauty and ethical depth...’) but already in 1980 was extremely well-known throughout the English-speaking world. His first collection Death of a Naturalist (London: Faber) was published to wide critical acclaim in 1966. Deane came to general public prominence largely through his work with Field Day, and went on to write the 1996 Booker Prize shortlisted novel Reading in the Dark. Paulin went on to become Professor of Poetry at Oxford. Rea went on to enjoy a very successful international stage, television and cinema career.

21 Edward Said, Frederic Jameson and Terry Eagleton all wrote pamphlets for the group (respectively ‘Yeats and Decolonisation’, ‘Modernism and Imperialism’ and ‘Nationalism, Irony and Commitment’), which were published together as the volume Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).

22 Whether or not, as has been claimed, Deane became the chief ideologue of the group in the sense that he dictated its overall direction, or whether he simply assumed a mantle of spokesperson that none of the other directors cared to don (and perhaps over-reached himself in presenting himself as the voice of a collective that was always more internally disparate in its views) is a moot point. The point is well discussed in ‘Prologue: The Beginnings’ in Carmen Szabo, Clearing the Ground: The Field Day Theatre Company and the Construction of Irish Identities, (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007).

23 Richard Kearney, for example, analyses Translations together with Faith Healer and The Communication Cord as Friel’s coming to terms with ‘the twin modern crises of identity and language.’ Kearney, Transitions, 123.
‘Ordnance Survey’), brings Yolland, an idealistic young lieutenant in the British Army, to lodge in the village of Baile Beag (in English ‘Small Town’) as a guest of his local accomplice Owen, who is tasked with helping him render local Irish place names into English. Owen’s father Hugh is the ‘hedge-school’ Master (the ‘hedge schools’ being improvised local classrooms, a reaction to the lack of a national educational system) and his brother Manus is his father’s classroom helper and an aspirant teacher in his own right. Owen, Hugh and Manus can all speak English, but Manus refuses to do so to mark his objection to the translation and mapping exercise. All the rest of the villagers speak only Irish (in performance, everyone speaks English and the audience is asked to accept the conceit that most are speaking Irish—leading to on-stage confusions that serve the narrative arc).

The action develops to play out the tensions between the brothers, one accepting the need to move with the changing linguistic times and the other refusing to do so. Their father, an improbable classical scholar and a perennial drunk, plays a courtly fool, speaking the truth of ancient wisdoms to the power of the affable but clueless Lieutenant Yolland, and stoically remaining above the political glowering between his sons. A romance develops between Yolland and a local Irish-speaking girl Máire, the romance flowering in the music of their incantatory exchange of the Irish place names that have come to enchant him even as he plans their destruction. As Yolland falls more deeply in love, Owen, the accomplice in the translation process, is ever more troubled at his role in serving up rough English renderings of what he more and more recognizes as his own emotional core of homeliness in the language of his birth and his locality. As the mapping progresses, the play takes on a frantic energy; something has to give in the conflict between continuity and change. The play closes on multiple forms of irresolution: Yolland has disappeared (perhaps murdered by mysterious anti-British locals who exist only as a menacing off-stage presence) and threats have been made by his superior that if he is not found, the village will be razed; Manus (the linguistic refusnik brother) has fled, fearing implication in the disappearance; Owen (the translation accomplice) ponders his future and his past, perhaps turning against his own erstwhile views of progress and towards an idea of fighting to resist change; Hugh, (the hedge-school classicist) is oddly—given his lampooning of the uncultured English during the play—turning in the other direction; reflecting on the survey process that ‘We must learn those new names… we must learn where we live. We must learn to make them our own. We must make them our new home’. The question of whether this is possible hangs in the air as the curtain falls.

The play, which has enjoyed a long international career of outings in translation and English language revivals since its first showing, has been heavily criticized in some quarters as a travesty of history, presenting the mapping and naming project as an exercise in colonial domination when it was in fact an exercise in preserving some remnant of the dying Gaelic culture, undertaken with meticulous concern for

24 Quoted in Richtarik, Acting Between the Lines, 32.
local history. Certainly, the play has been frequently claimed as a lament for culture lost and as such an exercise in historical blame-laying. Friel was always much more circumspect than this, claiming that the play was ‘a play about language and only about language’, and in this way converting the objections about historical inaccuracy into an indication that he was after the deeper fictional truth of emotional reality that required the distortion and foreshortening of history. There is perhaps a deliberate disingenuity here, in that the play investigates how language is inseparable from issues of identity, place, memory and loss. These are emotional conditions that, the play suggests, are experienced in and through language.

To read the play, however, as abstracting language into some idea of ‘flat’ and direct meaning so that these possible interpretations could be definitively fixed through a political (or analytic philosophical) interrogation would ignore the essential pliability and performativity of language which theatre as a form lends. In other words, if some critical reaction to the play would tend to reduce it to political simplicity, this ignores certain primary formal and thematic aspects that resist easy political readings. For example, the sharing of priority in the play amongst a generous list of characters produces the effect of complexifying both the political and emotional territories. The fact that each of the characters shows something of a conflict within themselves redoubles this complexity, and the play is structured so as to close on irresolution rather than resolution, shifting the obligation to provide meaning from the playwright onto the audience. The overall themes of language, memory and loss are played out in an emotional register, rather than in a political one that might indicate some kind of authorial policy of necessary resistance in the face of the movements of history and the processes of change. Reading a direct political message thus entails refusing emotional sympathies being encouraged by character development, and in this the play exemplifies the Field Day project of precisely complicating the field of potential emotional and political identifications in such a way as to create a mesh of history in place of a simple linear narrative, implicating history as an item of ‘point of view’ rather than objective trajectory. Insofar as this constitutes a grand thesis of the nature of history, it is in direct counterpoint and should be regarded as refuting the Yeatsian heroic mission of reclaiming a truer historical trajectory through recourse to long-gone mythical ages

26 Richtarik, *Acting Between the Lines*, 40.
27 Such an approach links in particular to the ongoing debates on ‘justice’ and/or ‘reconciliation’. See, for example, the series of essays in Scott Veitch, ed., *Law and the Politics of Reconciliation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).
29 In another of his most renowned works ‘Faith Healer’, Friel has the memory of the same sequence of events related by the three central characters present. Each produces an account barely recognisable to that of the others. Brian Friel, *Faith Healer* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001).
and to the ‘terrible beauty’ of revolutionary martyrdom. It is rather a thesis that carries a strong emotional undercurrent of pathos; the need to adapt and adjust to the vagaries of history as opposed to the power to define it, but nonetheless balanced by the need to ethically and actively respond to this potentially overwhelming condition; there is still the chance to build a new home in the new language.

In the programme notes to the first production of ‘Translations’, Seamus Deane refracted and made an explicit political point of the emotional tone of the play detailed immediately above. He attacked the empty ‘aestheticism’ of the existing theatre in Northern Ireland (as exemplified by the Lyric Theatre in Belfast) a theme to which he returned with renewed vigour in the programme notes to the second Field Day play, a translation by Friel of Chekhov’s ‘Three Sisters’, where he accused the lyric of ‘coterie drama’, while to the left, ‘community theatre’ came in for ridicule as the ‘plebification of drama’. Field Day was to walk a fine line ‘in the interval between these, while recognizing that it will every so often touch one of them’. Deane here is re-iterating and re-enforcing the original Friel and Rea’s idea of creating work that would demand audience engagement and in so doing re-invent the standard notion of audience both within and beyond the theatre walls: the idea was to create a theatre to create a people, to engender democracy through art. Such democracy-as-process ideas complement avant la lettre Habermasian deliberative democratic ideas with the idea that certain cultural forms at certain times bear a greater power than standard political discourse to make politics emotionally real and vital. In so doing, it also rehearses the paradox of justice from below or from above; the twisted hierarchy of high cultural (or elite knowledge) prompts to popular activism.

Theatre was not the only avenue of cultural intervention for Field Day. In the early 1980s, under the energetic stewardship of Deane, it reached out into other forms to further articulate and advance its ideas. Taking its cue from the core theme of ‘Translations’ the first further venture was a series of three pamphlets issued in 1983, each of them in some degree dealing with ‘the language question’ raised in the play. In ‘A New Look at the Language Question’, Tom Paulin took up the theme laid out by Hugh at the close of ‘Translations’ that ‘we must make these

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31 Quoted in Szabo Clearing The Ground, 10.

32 There are interesting comparisons here to the arguments on courts (with attendant iconography and iconology) as participative democratic spaces presented in Judith Resnik and Denis Curtis, Representing Justice: Invention, Controversy, and Rights in City-States and Democratic Courtrooms (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

33 Here there are evident links to the theorization (and practical study) of ‘transitional justice from below’: see, for example: Anna Eriksson, “A Bottom-Up Approach to Transformative Justice in Northern Ireland” International Journal of Transitional Justice 3 (2009) 301–320; McEvoy and McGregor Transitional Justice from Below.
words our own, we must learn to live in these places...’, with an investigation of the desirability and possibility of a coherent ‘Irish-English’ idiom, in the mould of ‘American-English’ or ‘Caribbean-English’. The essay opens with the line ‘the history of a language is often a story of possession and dispossession, territorial struggle and the establishment or imposition of a culture...’ and closes on the melancholy reflection that what can be recognized of a specific Irish-English idiom is ‘a living but fragmented speech, untold numbers of homeless words, and an uncertain or a derelict prose.’ The metonymic association of the language to the culture is generally automatic. The second essay is by Seamus Heaney ‘An Open Letter’ and chronicles in verse, in the form of a letter to the editors, his somewhat irate (yet such ire expressed in almost mannered courteousness) reflections on his inclusion without prior consultation in a Penguin Volume of Contemporary British Poetry. The essay contains the lines ‘be advised my passport’s green/No glass of ours was ever raised/To toast the Queen.34’ The final pamphlet in the trilogy was Deane’s analysis of a fundamental distinction that he identified at the core of British-Irish relations down the long durée of history and right through to the present, that of ‘Civilians and Barbarians’. Deane conducts his analysis in terms of the distinction as based on an idea of ‘lawful’ v ‘lawless’ but spreading out in reach as a culturally animating metaphor to the extent of structuring consciousness itself.35 He closes with the reflection that ‘of all the blighting distinctions which govern our responses and limit our imaginations at the moment, none is more potent than this...’. A second series of pamphlets issued in the following year took up where this notion of structuring metaphor left off, to examine Irish-English relations in terms of (in turn) writing style, myth and attitude.36 A third series issued in 1985 examined the issue of Protestant and Unionist identity (or identities) in Ireland and their intersection with the national and linguistic questions.37 The continuing themes are language, belonging and identity.

Taken in its entirety, the output of Field Day up until this point of about 1985 might be taken as an overall project to create as a supplement to the four provinces

34 A wonderful historical irony is that on the visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Dublin in 2011 Heaney was seated at her left hand and, at least on this occasion, did indeed raise his glass to toast the Queen.
36 The first six pamphlets mentioned here are collected in the volume Ireland’s Field Day, Hutchinson, London 1985; the 4th, 5th and 6th pamphlets are ‘Heroic Styles: the tradition of an idea’ by Seamus Deane, ‘Myth and Motherland’ by Richard Kearney, and ‘Anglo-Irish Attitudes’ by Declan Kiberd.
37 Field Day Pamphlets: No. 7, “The Whole Protestant Community” by Terence Brown; No. 8 “Watchmen in Sion” by Marianne Elliot; No. 9 “Liberty and Authority in Ireland” by Robert McCartney.
of Ireland a ‘fifth province of the imagination’ (an idea which harks back to an ancient Irish notion of the mystical fifth province of Ireland that hinged the other four). In more prosaic terms, the idea was that there did not have to be an identification with a physical territory, but rather with a cultural or imaginative idea, in order for people to feel ‘at home’, so long as this cultural idea was sufficiently robust and well grounded—hence the multi-modal exploration and building of this idea through numerous edited collections, essays, plays and media interventions. Of particular importance and to stand at the centre of the overall enterprise, there was projected the preparation of a ‘Field Day Anthology of Irish Literature’, to place the power of authority over the canon (modestly such a word was always rejected) firmly on Irish soil; a kind of physical instantiation of the fifth province idea, a repository of memory on which to base an imagination of culture and nation. Thus, through the vehicle of theatre that both in terms of theme and form articulated a different conception of audience as a different form of citizen; Field Day was to attempt the re-vivification of politics through culture, attempting to create a participative, democratic community almost by stealth. In its other cultural contributions, it was to set out a resource bank for a new cultural and social imagination, based on the recovered cultural history of Ireland, dragged from the bog where it had been cast by colonialism. The working assumption was that social upheaval and constitutional reform would surely follow.

A Field Too Green? Refusing Field Day

Not everyone was comfortable with this utopic vision. As the reputation and reach of the Field Day enterprise grew, with a landmark play produced and being registered as a great cultural event each year (critics now flew in from London and New York for the Derry/Londonderry premieres) and with the periodic release of the pamphlets and essays mentioned above, even so grew the storm clouds of dissent. An intellectual counterbalance to Field Day emerged around the figure of the prominent literary and cultural critic Edna Longley. Right through the latter years of the 1980s and into the early years of the 1990s, a period in which the Field Day brand first waxed and then later waned as its own energies sagged and the


39 See Richtarik, Acting Between the Lines, 239–255 for reference to other prominent writers adopting similar argumentative positions, for example John Wilson-Foster, Gerard Dawe, Frank McGuinness and Fintan O’Toole.
criticisms began to bite, Longley kept up a kind of cultural guerrilla campaign
against the group primarily through the pages of literary magazines such as The
Honest Ulsterman published in Belfast and The Crane Bag, published in Dublin.\textsuperscript{40}
In 1994 (by which stage there had been a definite shift of character within Field
Day towards a critical group with periodic theatre productions, rather than a
theatre company with ancillary critical commentary), she published a kind of ‘look
back in anger’ collection of essays that refined and collated her earlier thoughts
and which had at its core a virulent attack on the Field Day enterprise.\textsuperscript{41}
Longley rubbished the idea that Field Day had managed to transcend Yeatsian
myth through its recourse to post-colonial analysis. The myth behind their pur-
pored myth-debunking was for her an unreconstructed idea of the naturalness of
an all-island nation that, in the weft and warp of its images, ideas and literary
figures was overly determined by a Northern Catholic bias. She notes that she had
previously questioned the Field Day agenda on two main grounds: ‘firstly, that
their chosen political model appeared to simplify the state of literary play, to
ignore the cultural negotiations at work in poetry in the North and to foreclose on
the new politics they might symbolize; secondly, that a distinctively Northern
Nationalist formation was claiming a wider validity than it had earned, not only
with respect to the North but also with respect to the whole island.’\textsuperscript{42}
The rejection of the Yeatsian visions she analyses as not alone animated by a distrust of the
myths of ancient heroism, but by a distrust of the Protestantism identified with
Yeats, and with this a rejection of the genius of (Irish) Protestantism itself. For her,
Field Day was a group, under the guise of historical illumination, dedicated to
replacing myth with myth of their own perhaps subconscious choosing or as she
quotes approvingly the novelist Colm Tóibín, ‘a number of men [who] have come
to believe in their own dreams’. Yeats, in contrast, was reclaimed as the poet (as in
the title of her book) of ‘the living stream’; if making myth then at least doing so
self-consciously as a willful transcendent politics. Furthermore, Field Day, by
virtue of having virtually no women authors represented in its supposedly defin-
tive Anthology of Irish Literature, had exposed itself to claims of macho bias, a
theme that Longley had rehearsed in an earlier essay.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{40} For a series of references see Richtarik Acting Between the Lines, 244–255, and Szabo
Clearing the Ground, ‘conclusion’.
\textsuperscript{41} Edna Longley, The Living Stream; literature and revisionism in Ireland, (Newcastle:
Bloodaxe Books, 1994).
\textsuperscript{42} Longley, The Living Stream, 23. The self-reference is to her earlier essay “Poetry and Politics
in Northern Ireland”.
\textsuperscript{43} In the essay From Cathleen to Anorexia: The Breakdown of Irelands (Dublin: Attic Press,
1990) Longley’s attack on Field Day is in part structured around an idea of feminism in contrast
to the perceived ‘macho’ qualities of Field Day. Field Day in fact acknowledged the error of
omission of women’s voices and set about the task of producing complementary volumes which
eventually emerged in 2005: Angela Bourke ed. The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing
Volumes IV and V: Irish Women’s Writing and Tradition: v. 4 and 5 Cork: Cork University Press,
2005.
The Longley attacks were certainly powerful, and by this stage (1994), the group in its original incarnation (centred around Friel and Rea) was collapsing under the weight of that inevitable internal condition ‘artistic differences’. However, to retrospectively note change is not to diminish the force of the cultural impact at the time, and the critical engagement with Field Day need not to be regarded as a zero-sum game leading to nothing gained. The attack by Longley (and in this, she was representative of a good many others) was not a rejection of the idealism of the ‘fifth province’ idea, or even a rejection of Irish nationalism, or of the need for and value of cultural production and criticism as directly politically contributory and confrontational. It was rather, an outflanking of Field Day as having reduced itself to imagining a fifth field which would necessarily be green. She recognized that there was at work a politics of the imaginary, but contested its qualities: it was not sufficiently rigorous, since it was not subtle enough to get to grips with a distinctive Protestant and/or Unionist imaginary, and not generous enough to find a way to converse with those that did, being more interested in reaching out to an imagined band of post-colonial brothers, or as Longley has it, engaging in ‘intellectual holiday romances in a post-colonial never-never land’. For her, the Field Day Anthology (published in 1991) was an attempt at producing a ‘master version’ of history in its choices, exclusions, categorizations and editorial comments (not to mention in its implicit sexism). It was a version she rejected not only as insufficiently inclusive as history, but also as insufficiently subtle as a form of literary appreciation/criticism. Field Day, in other words, was despite itself lapsing into dewy-eyed sentimentalism about some kind of pure Irishness, and using this projected image (largely created by the prism of borrowed post-colonial theory) to attempt to fashion a future. Longley’s move then was in no way a denial of the political nature of culture, or a denial of the value of an attempt to deliberately approach political issues through cultural forms, but rather a deepening of the terms of engagement and a claim that a politics of the Irish imaginary demanded more than it was offered by the Field Day group. In effect then what is constituted in the engagement between Field Day and Longley is itself a productive antagonistic cultural politics that, as in ‘Translations’, is ultimately characterized by its lack of resolution. Each side is animated by the same ideal that culture matters very deeply, to the point where important poems and plays (neither side shies from an idea of cultural standards) deserve the same detailed critical attention as do foundational legal and political documents, precisely because they are equally socially constitutive.

44 Friel’s play Dancing at Lughnasa was offered to The Abbey theatre Dublin rather than Field Day and premiered in 1990. Friel formally resigned from the Field Day Board in 1994.
45 This is clear from Longley’s essay, “Poetry and Politics in Northern Ireland”.
46 This is a neat inversion of the animating argument of the Law and Literature movement that legal (and political) texts deserve analysis as forms of literature. For a recent major contribution in this field see Desmond Manderson, Kangaroo Courts and the Rule of Law: The Legacy of Modernism (London: Routledge, 2012). See also Cormack, A Power to do Justice.
Fast forward only four years from Longley’s *The Living Stream* (as noted above a kind of paperweight to a long-term engagement with these themes) and fourteen from the publication by *Field Day* of Deane’s engagement with Yeats in his ‘Heroic Styles’ pamphlet (which had particularly raised Longley’s ire and sparked the decade-long *Field Day*/Longley debate) and this notion of imaginary politics is right at the heart of the eventual constitutional settlement, the ‘Belfast/Good Friday Agreement’ of April 1998, that marked the conversion of violent conflict into non-violent political confrontation. The Agreement in effect provides for an agreement to disagree on the constitutional ‘ownership’ of Northern Ireland, this copper fastened by the ‘principle of consent’; that should the majority of the citizens of Northern Ireland wish to rupture the Union with the Great Britain this would be made possible, but until that point, the territory would remain as a devolved part of the United Kingdom. There was also, to facilitate the ongoing recognition at the heart of the Agreement that some citizens principally identified as ‘Irish’ and others as ‘British’, an understanding that the individual subject/citizen might identify culturally where they chose within a structure of governance where ‘both traditions’ would be accorded equal status. The ‘equal status’ is not a declaration with no practical import, but rather a commitment to supporting cultural expression in multiple forms and to neutralizing those elements considered most culturally one-sided and therefore offensive. In this latter category, for example, there was a systematic re-naming exercise in relation to government functions and departments to remove designations of connection to the British Crown and to replace them with more neutral and local nomenclature; paradigmatic here was the re-naming of the ‘Royal Ulster Constabulary’ to the ‘Police Service of Northern Ireland’. On the positive side of cultural recognition was the notion incorporated into the Agreement of ‘parity of esteem’ for the principle cultural traditions. As an example, in linguistic terms, this translated into a commitment to promote the Irish and Ulster-Scots languages (and associated cultural forms) through capital and programme development funds, and also to the extent that government information would be provided in all three languages (English, Irish, Ulster-Scots).

While such a sense of productive irresolution definitely recalls (and I would argue echoes) the *Field Day*/Longley debates, writing on the genesis of the Agreement generally ignores this cultural theme, and privileges the more obviously political. The route to the Agreement is generally traced back to the 1981

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47 The Belfast Agreement (also known as ‘Good Friday Agreement’ after the signing date) is a composite name for the ‘British-Irish Agreement’ and the ‘Multi-Party Agreement’ (the former in effect assenting to and institutionalizing in international law the latter agreement between local politicians). The Agreement therefore, while undoubtedly constitutional, is not a constitution since Northern Ireland does not have the quality of a State. For an account of the legal delicacies (that reflect political ones) see Austen Morgan, *The Belfast Agreement: a practical legal analysis* (London: The Belfast Press, 2000). Insofar as the Agreement sets in place mechanisms of review (and thus is self-consciously ‘transitional’) it bears comparison to the Interim Constitution of South Africa of 1993.

48 This emphasis on language and the symbolic centrality of naming recalls the *Field Day* focus, particularly as expressed in ‘Translations’, discussed above.
hunger strikes in the Maze prison, during the course of which Bobby Sands, the first hunger striker, was put forward for election and elected as an MP in a move designed to put pressure on the British government to agree to the demands for prisoner ‘political status’. While the demands were not granted and Sands subsequently died (as did nine others in the same protest), the political narrative is often developed that the events of the hunger strike marked a shifting of the balance of power within the Republican movement away from those dedicated to armed insurrection and towards those who advocated ‘a ballot box in one hand, and an Armalite in the other’ (a process which culminated, over many years, in the dropping of the Armalite from the political equation). 49 What this version of a trajectory does not include is a pattern of understanding of how the political ideas themselves became fashioned around a notion of the politics of an imaginary, a decoupling of the idea of citizenship from the idea of defined territory. 50 Yet this is exactly the cultural imaginative work that had been done (and in almost exact temporal parallel given Field Day’s first production in late 1980 and the Hunger Strike in early 1981) by the Field Day group and its interlocutors like Longley; the figuring of a space of identity, betimes frictional and oppositional, yet located in an area beyond the field of territorial politics; a realization of a version of the fifth province through a re-constitutionalization of the fourth. The political discourse had become, in this close intertwining of all matters of past and future with questions of culture and identity, a kind of crude version of the grand cultural conversation that had run through the 1980s and early 1990s with Field Day at one pole and critics such as Longley at the other. 51

Building Walls: Good Fences Make Good Neighbours?

If on one level, the new political discourse was a reproduction of the preceding cultural conversation, on another level, it quickly departed radically from it precisely in that it quickly lost the flavour of conversation at all, and took on the

49 For an overview see Mallie and McKittrick, The Fight for Peace, 20–28. ‘ArmaLite’ is a brand named assault rifle. The quote is attributed to Danny Morrison, Sinn Fein director of publicity, speaking at the Sinn Fein Ard-Fheis (Annual Convention) 1981.


51 It would be certainly possible to attempt a sociological analysis of the direct links from Field Day (and Crane Bag) protagonists such as Friel, Deane, Heaney and Kearney to developments within the thought of John Hume as leader of the SDLP who ‘brought in from the cold’ Gerry Adams and the republican movement, to the reconceptualizations within republican thought which allowed for eventual political accommodation. For work in this vein see John Hume Personal Views (Dublin: Town House, 1996); Barry White John Hume (Belfast: Blackstaff, 1984). The aim here, however, is to remain at a more abstract level dealing with shifts in ideas rather than individual changes of mind.
contours of a dialogue of the deaf. The Field Day vs critics ongoing, if sometimes
testy or even aggressive, engagement with notions of Irish identity and their link to
cultural and linguistic issues always had the dynamic of a kind of Derridean
différance; the deferral of final meaning in the recognition of difference as an
active process rather than static encounter. Its success was always in its failure,
since failure was built into the model, and so the lack of agreement and the ability
to keep on finding ways to investigate the articulation of this lack was in a way its
greatest triumph. Agreement, in other words, kills conversation, but Field Day was
spiky, provocative, punkish, resolutely determined to attempt profound comment,
and its opponents were no less so and no less able. In the translation of some of this
cultural imagination onto the political plane, there was the betrayal of auto-
interrogation and restlessness. In the Agreement of 1998, the conversation that was
killed was the idea of a transcendent unity-in-disagreement of Northern Irish
culture, in favour of a retreat into the safer territory of mutual respect but fund-
damental and enduring difference; the Agreement to disagree moved from ongoing
discussion to tense silence on matters of culture and to a focus on the ‘safe’ ground
of jobs, housing and health, where the political Unionist/Nationalist logic of ‘one
for you, one for me’ became absolutely standard.

This pattern of ideas is at least in part structurally conditioned, in that political
representatives at the local assembly have to designate themselves as ‘Unionist’,
‘Nationalist’ or ‘Other’ in order that a complex system of power-sharing between
these two ‘traditions’ of ‘Nationalist’ and ‘Unionist’ can be facilitated. When this
is coupled to the deeply ingrained atavistic habits of cultural identification pred-
icated on notions of foundational difference, the picture is not promising. In effect
what was allowed to emerge was a notion of culture defined by the same kind of
tripartite structure as the ‘Nationalist’, ‘Unionist’ and ‘Other’ political designa-
tions, in the cultural sphere being ‘Irish Language/Culture’ (for which read broadly
a perceived Catholic Nationalist Culture) ‘Ulster-Scots Culture’ (for which read
broadly Presbyterian Unionist Culture) and ‘Other Culture’ (for which read
broadly ‘high culture’) all under the promotional aegis of the ‘Department for
Culture, Arts and Leisure’ or DCAL. There resulted the accommodation of the
sectarianization of culture (with associated solid links to ‘community’ and ‘tra-
dition’) and an acceptance of such a state of affairs as worthy of management
rather than challenge.\footnote{A further dynamic of the political treatment of culture that has emerged since the Agreement plays to the cross-cutting theme of class within Northern Irish society, and that is the consolidation of a long term institutional and conceptual distinction between ‘arts’ and ‘community arts’. Both these forms of art are government funded indirectly through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, and sometimes directly in terms of specific programme grants (particularly for community arts and community festivals) and capital project allocation (particularly for the traditional arts infrastructural provision in terms of theatre and music venues) from DCAL. The community arts sector is supported through a number of local NGOs (the main umbrella group being ‘The Community Arts Partnership’) and the traditional arts sector populated by a wide variety of organizations, with the theatre sector particularly prominent, there being about a dozen Northern Ireland based professional theatre companies. There seems to have}
In parallel to the manoeuvres outlined above, another large-scale impetus is identifiable as an intersection to the parcelling out of culture, and that is the commodification of culture as a spur to development. Certainly, this discourse spreads far beyond the shores of Northern Ireland, but it has been vigorously embraced here both by the government and to a certain extent, in a potential pact with the devil, by arts organizations themselves. Such organizations play for the politicians the sweet music of the ‘cultural pound’, that is the amount of revenue generated locally by arts organizations and events, in terms of local employment, the attraction of external revenues and the spur to the circulation of local monies not only into the primary sites such as theatres, music venues etc., but also into the secondary sites such as cafes, pubs, restaurants, etc. The politicians in turn provide, or have up until this point, capital funding for large-scale projects such as the construction of (large concert venue) ‘The Waterfront Hall’ and (large theatre/dance/visual arts space) the ‘Metropolitan Arts Centre’. If there is a sub-division of culture at one level into areas of specific community-‘owned’ interest, the common denominator for culture becomes that of economic development, culture redefined as ‘the creative industries’; as the Arts Council of Northern Ireland declares on its website ‘Our mission is to put the arts at the centre of our social, economic and creative life’. The high point to this process is the designation of Derry/London-derry as the UK City of Culture for 2013. The delicious irony here is that the criteria for selection were largely based on the notion of which city would most benefit from the regenerative effects of such an award, which would (the thinking goes) bring culture trailing in its wake and with culture money, rather than which was the most ‘cultural’ city to begin with.

Taking the above series of developments (the reification, sectarianization and commodification of culture) together, it is hard to maintain a sense that the profound mission that Field Day set itself of creating a new democratic politics through creating a new engaged cultural audience has met with much enduring success. Nevertheless, it is important to recall that the profile of its concerns set the scene in terms of identity and language for the political discussions, leading to the eventual political settlement, and the idea of the importance of facilitating cultural identification as a technique to defuse conflict over territory lies absolutely at the heart of the Agreement. It is true that many of the other dynamics as to a grand social re-imaginations have been lost or diluted. The deliberate confrontation of sectarianism has been collapsed into a soft-soap governmental politics of ‘Cohesion, Sharing and Integration’, and this has been channelled down into support for the arts along lines which, under the guise of ‘parity of esteem’ for different ‘cultures’, ‘communities’ and ‘traditions’ accept the enduring status of those cultures and their necessary difference one from the other. In a comparison of the

(Footnote 52 continued)
been an implicit acceptance that this distinction between community arts and ‘arts’ is somehow fundamental and the institutional (and funding) structure has developed to support both, with the division rarely troubled from either side.
NI Assembly policy documents ‘A Shared Future’ from 2005 and ‘Cohesion, Sharing and Integration’ from 2010, Todd and Ruane note that:

*Cohesion* sees ‘cultures’ and ‘identities’ as given and stable entities. In *Shared Future*, the vision was of constant cultural change and dynamism: with individuals making their cultural and identity choices in a context of social division, economic difficulty and permeable cultural boundaries, the strategic aim being to facilitate these choices through creation of a safe environment with mutual recognition state-neutrality between cultures.

In *Cohesion*, in our view, the vision amounts to a ‘reification’ of cultures which pushes change into the future and loses sight of both its positive potential and of the dangers of the present.53

The *Field Day* railing against the empty aestheticism of ‘coterie drama’ to one hand and the ‘plebification of culture’ to the other, and the promotion of performative democracy has been dissolved by the acceptance that community arts are distinctly different to ‘high’ arts (their value being defined in terms of participation rather than quality of product) and both have been divorced from any grand political import except through vague processes of long-term change. Such change has been captured by discourses of economic development within the overall acceptance that the political core structure itself is not subject to any radical critique, and here Northern Ireland is little different to anywhere else in the developed West. Cultural politics has been quieted from a revolutionary notion to a series of programmes of action that have used entrenched ideas of fundamental difference and inevitable forms of order as their model. But none of these qualifications should minimize the remarkable success of making culture part of the skeleton of the political agenda in the first place, and recent events would tend to indicate that the day may once again have arrived for cultural issues to take centre stage as a matter of priority, and for ‘culture’ to once again be opened up for interrogation as some forward-looking species of unity in difference, rather than accepted as simply a matter of delineation and support of mutually exclusive ‘traditions’. The archive of concentrated artistic and related critical attention to questions of belonging, tradition, culture and the emotional weight of such questions (a portion of which has been sketched above) remains as a potentially fruitful resource, should the political ground shift.

53 Jennifer Todd and Joseph Ruane, “From ‘A Shared Future’ to ‘Cohesion, Sharing and Integration’; An analysis of Northern Ireland’s Framework Documents” *Institute for British Irish Studies (IBIS), University College Dublin*, (2010), 3. ‘Cohesion, Sharing and Integration’ following adverse critical reaction, was re-opened for further consultation in 2010 and at the time of writing, December 2012, remains under review and unpublished in revised form.
Love is a Battlefield? The Dynamics of Transitional Justice Scholarship

Having entered the field of cultural politics in post-conflict Northern Ireland, the opportunity presents itself to cast a sideways glance to a related issue of transitional justice scholarship generally and its recent evolutions and self-interrogations. The argument presented here has been that certain cultural ideas (here associated with Field Day as case study) animated the Northern Irish political settlement. What followed could be described as the reverse colonization of this field of ideas by a political structure that managed to turn the open field into a series of well-tended sectarian monocultures. It might also be suggested that a parallel process happened, to some degree parasitic on the first, whereby the task of thinking about the dynamics of conflict (and post-conflict) was displaced from the broadly cultural arena, professionalized and re-located largely within the academic sphere. Northern Irish academia is host to large numbers of scholars working on conflict and post-conflict issues, under a variety of rubrics and within a variety of departments, schools and faculties; ‘peace studies’, ‘conflict studies’, ‘post-conflict studies’, ‘restorative justice programmes’, ‘peace and reconciliation studies’ etc. Just as there is a large ‘troubles industry’ in reviewing and dealing with the past through government initiative, there is a vibrant sub-sector in the academy, providing the intellectual and policy foundations of such activity and doing their best to sell the idea of the comparative value of the Northern Irish case to international scholars and, in particular, fee-paying students. Each of the two law schools, for example, plays host to large-scale study programmes in ‘transitional justice’ and teaches this subject as a major part of their curriculum. This local development chimes with the seemingly exponential growth of this subject over the last ten years or so.

Such general growth and the expansion into ‘interdisciplinarity’ have been recently examined as both local and global phenomenon and critically figured in terms of the notion of ‘field’ by Professor Christine Bell, who has commented in the following terms:

I have argued that the narration of the field of transitional justice studies as interdisciplinarity is not a romantic and innocent call to intellectual interchange. Rather it performs two political functions; it assists in consolidating and legitimating transitional justice as a field, and it enables an attack on the perceived colonization of the field by law.

Professor Bell is an ex-director of the Transitional Justice Institute of the University of Ulster, and ex-inhabitant of the city of Derry/Londonderry from

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54 Not to say that political comment doesn’t happen through culture, but the sense of direct link to political change has been lost in favour of the professional apparatus designed to operationalize change at the behest of government; the ground has been settled.

55 Such growth is succinctly and powerfully reviewed in Bell, “State of the Field”.

whence sprang the Field Day enterprise (she is currently Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Edinburgh). In an at-times extremely elegant dissection of the current ‘state of the field or non-field’ of transitional justice scholarship, the overall enterprise is nevertheless rendered somewhat confusing by the implicit encouragement it provides to recursively apply to its own process a series of distinctions that it by turns posits as useful analytic devices and then dissolves; ‘field/non-field’, ‘crisis/non-crisis’, ‘practice/scholarship’, ‘norm/narrative’ etc. While such a technique has great illuminative effect in highlighting the huge dynamism in the scholarship and the concomitant difficulty in trying to create adequate heuristics to maintain a sense of coherence and utility, it is in danger of either falling prey to its own complications or opting for oversimplification in order to find a way through the morass. Professor Bell reaches just such a kind of simplifying ‘truth’ position in a rendering of the familiar Clausewitzian ‘war as politics’ dynamic. The proposition here is that all confusions can be resolved through an Ur-analytic of ‘transitional justice studies as a battlefield’; in other words, when people say that they want to join the (interdisciplinary) conversation, what is really going on is that they want to discursively hack everyone else down. Joining the fray, Professor Bell attempts to cut her own swathe with a notional sword of the ‘normative core content of justice’ and seeks to define transitional justice as married to a ‘deep justice project’ predicated on negotiations between academics and practitioners who accept that ‘justice has a normative core content’ and that ‘meaningful justice as an outcome can only be achieved through a combination of reason and passion in pursuit of changed power relationships’.57

The inherent paradoxes here are not only just practical (in what seems the reservation of passion to practitioners and reason to academics) but also metaphorical (conflict resolution dynamics figured as a battle?) and metaphysical (justice as normative content yet also as the will-to-peace of latter-day Joans of Arc). The reference to ‘reason and passion’ is in fact an auto-reference to a scheme of ideas developed in Bell’s most recent book ‘On the Law of Peace’ (OUP, 2008) where the scheme is pushed even further through the mechanism of analogizing the need for reason and passion to Blake’s idea of the need for a marriage ‘of heaven and hell’.58 It is perhaps beside the point to note that the examples provided (of peace agreement provisions and related negotiations and measures) would tend to indicate less of a marriage of heaven and hell than, well, a marriage; a series of compromises based on a long-term commitment to intimately living

57 Bell, “State of the Field” 27.
together in harmony.⁵⁹ In this latest essay (which draws on the scheme of ideas laid out in the book), there is a plea for the reservation of ‘transitional justice’ studies to a relatively pure legal field as a guard against the dangers of slack, jumbled thinking animated by some romantic notion that mixing everything up is a good idea because people talking to each other is necessarily a good thing.

Professor Bell’s caution here as to the necessarily good outcomes of allowing everyone their say with a naivete that all are participating on a ‘level playing field’ is well-advised. And yet, given the dominance and conditioning nature of her own chosen metaphors (‘field’, ‘battlefield’ ‘heaven’ ‘hell’), one wonders just how secure such an attempt to insulate out and prioritize ‘the legal’ could ever be if even its leading exponent displays a counterloyalty to a pattern of anti-normative literary behaviour in the very act of expressing their love of law? In other words, the grain of Bell’s argument as to the necessary centrality of law crashes beneath the weight of the metaphorical structure that she tries to construct for it. There is an unacknowledged tension in the work because it is not able in its own terms to create that meaningful relationship between reason and passion, precisely, I suspect, because it is too wedded to the dualism implied in that opposition. In other words, a deep justice project cannot bootstrap itself into discursive coherence by force of will because such willfulness brings with it the kind of abuse of language that constitutes a kind of linguistic injustice in an environment where words really matter. Justice scholarship should rather be deeply attentive to the processes of language and culture on multiple levels, including, and very basically, the level of metaphors brought to bear within any work that seeks to propose what is in effect a linguistic solution to a series of practical problems. This is the lesson of Field Day and the encounter with critics like Longley: language, particularly at certain constitutional moments, is a form of practice and it is worth every ounce of energy and attention that can be lavished on it. Transitional justice is not a battle, and (post-conflict) scholarship is not usefully figured as a battlefield.⁶⁰

The implication of the above is that transitional justice is not necessarily defined by the fight to distinguish between ‘legal’ transitional justice and ‘other’ transitional justice, which is read as the struggle for an attachment to ‘core normative content’. Rather it is more appropriately constituted precisely in the recognition of justice as a vector concept that functions simultaneously in law, politics and in what might be generally termed the realm of affect. If law goes to accountability and politics to reconciliation, then affective justice is the sense, the feeling, that justice has been done. Transitional justice should aim at a coherence

⁵⁹ For a helpful (in this context) historical sociology of love and marriage see Niklas Luhmann Love as Passion: the codification of intimacy (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

of a specific kind that is not dependent on a master discourse, but is dependent on
the ability of the doubled terms (‘transition’ and ‘justice’) to signify appropriately
and positively in multiple arenas at the same time (a task ironically facilitated
perhaps because ‘transition’ as a concept is so resoundingly empty wherever it is
placed, while ‘justice’ is to a symmetrical extent resoundingly full; one tends to
balance the other).

Literature provides valuable lessons in such delicate operations of co-ordination
in that literary justice is precisely built around the recognition of the value of often
paradoxical relationships between text and sub-text (the fact that the reader is
invited to be more enlightened than the character) and the engagement of the
senses. Literature is the master discourse of the affect, in the sense not of domi-
nating or dictating meaning within a field of inquiry that must be taken to include
anthropology, psychology and the social sciences generally, but in the sense of
fashioning itself to include the insights of all these modes of inquiry in a form that
is of the most affective. Therefore, the general case made here on the basis of a
generalizable local example, is that transitional justice, precisely in acknowledging
itself as a process inseparable from feelings of justice, is literally unthinkable
without the lessons of literature and art.

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**Author Biography**

**Eugene McNamee** Thanks to Peter Rush, the anonymous reviewers, and to Fionnuala Ni Aolain and Bill Rolston for their helpful comments on an earlier draft.
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<td>[h</td>
<td>[h or \h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transpose</td>
<td>[h</td>
<td>[h or \h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close up</td>
<td>linking [h characters</td>
<td>[h or \h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insert or substitute space between characters or words</td>
<td>/ through character or [h where required</td>
<td>[h or \h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce space between characters or words</td>
<td>between characters or words affected</td>
<td>[h</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>