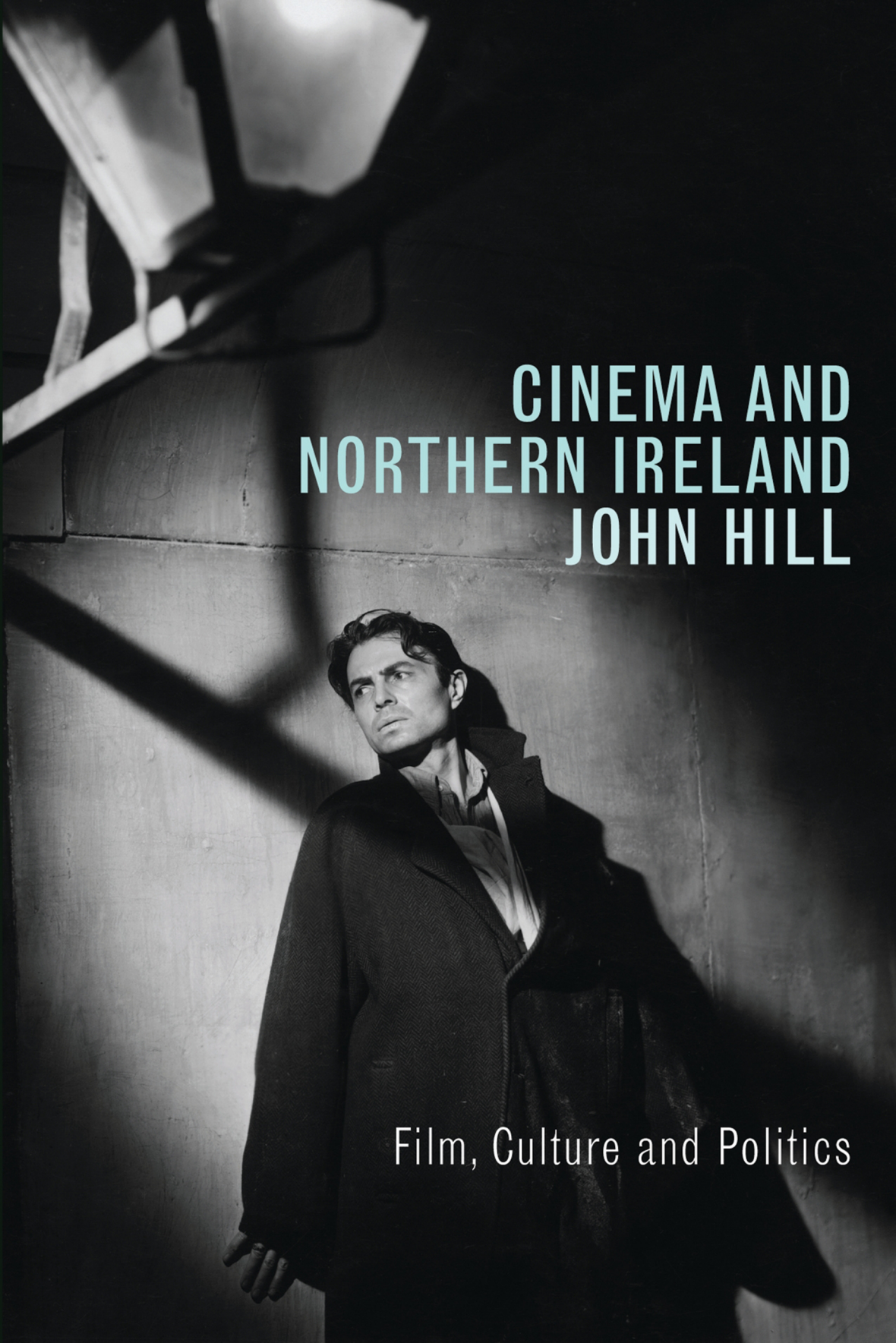

CINEMA AND NORTHERN IRELAND

JOHN HILL

Film, Culture and Politics

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For my father and mother,
Rowan and Isobel Hill

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Introduction

In 2001 I attended a meeting at the UK Film Council in London at which the Head of the New Cinema Fund, Paul Trijbits, showed us the trailer for a film, in which he had invested Lottery funds. The film was *Bloody Sunday* (Paul Greengrass, 2001) and concerned the killing of thirteen unarmed civilians by British paratroopers in Derry in 1972. It was, according to Trijbits, 'a story that deserved to be told', while the trailer itself informed us that the film was about the 'people who were there' rather than 'about politics'. As it turned out, neither of these claims were to go unchallenged. The film was attacked by both Conservative politicians in Britain and Unionist politicians in Northern Ireland for its supposedly 'anti-army' and 'pro-republican' bias. Unionists were particularly incensed by the claims of the local actor James Nesbitt, who plays the civil rights leader Ivan Cooper in the film, that Protestants in Northern Ireland felt a degree of 'collective guilt' over the killings.[1] Such was the animosity (including hate mail) directed at the actor (who is himself from a Protestant background) that he reported his fears for the safety of his parents, who were still living in Northern Ireland.[2] Although the film-makers stood over the accuracy of the film's portrait of events and others queried whether the film actually played down (rather than exaggerated) the extent of the British Army's culpability for the deaths, what the controversy reveals is how difficult it is for any film concerning Northern Ireland to transcend political divisions.[3] Pace the comments of Trijbits, the events of Bloody Sunday were not an unknown story waiting to be told. Rather the events were remembered all too well in Northern Ireland and continued to inform and animate politics in the years that followed (such that the British government was eventually forced into establishing an official enquiry into the day's events some twenty-six years later in 1998). The issue was therefore not whether *the* story of Bloody Sunday should be told so much as which version of the story should be told and with what resonances for the present.

The controversy surrounding *Bloody Sunday* may be read as emblematic of the way in which films made in and about Northern Ireland have nearly always contributed to, and become implicated in, broader political conflicts concerning the region. Established under the Government of Ireland Act of 1920, enacted by the British parliament, the political standing of Northern Ireland has remained contested since its inception. Created in the face of the wish of the majority in Ireland for independence from Britain, the legitimacy of Northern Ireland's political separation from the rest of Ireland has remained an issue not only for the mainly Catholic nationalists within Northern Ireland but also successive Irish governments. In the case of northern unionists (who benefited from one-party rule for nearly fifty years), the partition of Ireland (and the departure of twenty-six counties from the United Kingdom) led to an extreme defensiveness

1. 'Unionist politicians angry at Bloody Sunday film', *Financial Times*, 8 January 2002, p. 4.
2. *Belfast Telegraph*, 19 January 2002, p. 9.
3. While welcoming the film's avoidance of naive 'conspiracy theory', Martin McLoone argues that the film's portrait of 'confusion on all sides' actually lets the 'the British authorities and the army off the hook' in his review of the film in *Cinéaste*, vol. xxvii, no. 4, 2002, p. 42. For a more general discussion of the film, and the issues to which it gives rise, see Lance Pettitt, '*Bloody Sunday*: Dramatising Popular History in TV Film', in Rosa Gonzáles (ed.), *The Representation of Ireland/s: Images from Outside and from Within* (Barcelona: PPU, 2003), pp. 45–59.

concerning the constitutional position of the new semi-state that manifested itself in the adoption of authoritarian legal measures, discrimination against the Catholic minority and the domination of the public sphere by Protestantism. It was, however, this very lack of fairness that ultimately proved the Unionist regime's undoing when the failure to accommodate peaceful demands for civil rights led to an escalation of political divisions into armed conflict at the end of the 1960s (and the introduction of direct rule by the British government in 1972). Following a protracted and messy 'war', involving republicans, loyalists and the British Army, during which over 3,000 people were killed, the political situation once again changed following the announcement of the paramilitary ceasefires in 1994. However, despite the reduction in violence that ensued, political life within the North has continued to be dominated by conflicts based upon competing national and religious affiliations and disputes over governance (that have been evident in the problems surrounding the operations of a politically devolved assembly since the late 1990s).

Film history, culture and politics

Given the overwhelming significance of political, religious and ethnic divisions within Northern Ireland, it is to be expected that the cinema, as with most areas of social life, should have been drawn into the political arena. However, while the political history of Northern Ireland is now well known (if not necessarily agreed), the history of film in Northern Ireland is much less so. This is possibly not surprising. For while cinemagoing in Northern Ireland, as elsewhere, was a popular pursuit for most of the twentieth century, Northern Ireland itself, for a variety of economic, political and geographical reasons, did not develop as a significant centre for film production. As a result, most standard histories of British cinema ignore Northern Ireland altogether, while most studies of Irish cinema concentrate overwhelmingly on developments on the rest of the island. However, while film-making in the North of Ireland may have been slight, the few films made in or about Northern Ireland could also be said to have gained an extra significance precisely because of this scarcity. Moreover, due to the excessive symbolism attached to all aspects of social and cultural life within Northern Ireland, few films have escaped the cultural conflicts of the time, characteristically bearing the ideological marks of the society in which they have been made or accruing extra political associations as a result of the ways in which audiences have responded to them. It is considerations such as these that underpin the study that follows. Drawing extensively on primary sources, the book reveals what is, in effect, an unknown history, providing the first account of films made in Northern Ireland and the circumstances in which they were produced and received. However, precisely because of the distinctive characteristics of Northern Irish society, the study also sets out to analyse how films themselves have contributed to, and illuminated what is culturally at stake in, the political conflicts that have characterised the region's history.

These issues inevitably have consequences for the approach that the book adopts. For while the emphasis of the discussion is on actual films, the concern to unravel the political dimensions of the cinema in Northern Ireland leads the study away from straightforward textual analysis. The aim of the book, in this respect, is to combine textual analysis with a discussion of the (political, cultural and industrial) contexts in which films were both produced and received. In this way the analysis is designed to show how political and institutional factors influenced the pro-

duction of films at particular moments as well as how the interpretations of films were shaped by the cultural and ideological predispositions of the audiences that watched them. However, while the discussion indicates the ways in which patterns of production, representation and reception were interconnected, it also suggests how these did not always neatly coalesce. Thus, the discussion also indicates how, in certain circumstances, the intentions of film-makers and politicians were subverted by the representational conventions that films employed or how audiences 'read' films in ways that defied the meanings that the films themselves seemed to propose. In this respect, the book does not provide one unidirectional history of the cinema and Northern Ireland but rather a number of overlapping accounts of production, state policy, representational conventions and reception that together help to explain the tensions and contests over meaning that have been a recurring feature of films made in and about Northern Ireland.

This also means that many of the films on which the book focuses are unusual. Conventional film histories, particularly those concerned with national cinemas, have been inclined to concentrate on the history of the feature film and the role that it has played in sustaining an industry and elaborating national concerns. In the case of the cinema and Northern Ireland, however, the feature film occupies a much less prominent role due to the lack of obvious economic advantages that have been attached to making films there. As a result, it has been more 'marginal' forms of film production – 'quota quickies', government-sponsored documentaries, information films, travelogues and newsreels – that have, until recently, constituted the main film history of Northern Ireland. However, while these films may have been 'marginal' in terms of the workings of the film industry, this study suggests how they nevertheless assumed an ideological importance at odds with their apparently humble economic status. In devoting space to them, therefore, the book seeks not only to demonstrate the value for film studies of extending analysis beyond the feature film in national and regional film historiography but also to show how even overtly propagandist, or 'univocal', texts may be read productively as sites of representational conflict.

It should also be evident that, while the book's focus is Northern Ireland, the boundaries of the study are nevertheless fluid. For just as Northern Ireland itself cannot be adequately understood without reference to Britain and the rest of Ireland so the cinema in Northern Ireland cannot be discussed separately from developments elsewhere. There is, in this respect, no 'indigenous' Northern Irish cinema as such, given the virtual absence historically of films that could be said to have been exclusively funded by, or made in, Northern Ireland by local personnel. 'Northern Irish' film-making, in this regard, has been heavily dependent historically upon funding, and professional support, from mainly British but also southern Irish sources. As a result, the history of film in Northern Ireland has been interwoven with the histories of British and Irish cinema without fully belonging to either. Indeed, while accounts of 'national' cinemas have traditionally explored the ways in which films may reinforce or subvert established notions of national identity, this is clearly problematic in the case of Northern Ireland, where not only is there no shared sense of national identity among those who live there but the films themselves have participated in a larger cultural struggle related to the politics of partition and the region's identity as 'British' or 'Irish' (or both). Given the increasing complexity of identifying any cinema as 'national', the study of cinema in Northern Ireland therefore affords an illuminating example of a cinema for which the relationship to nationality has always been an issue.

Organisation

The structure of the book itself is as follows. Chapter 1 deals with the beginnings of film production in Northern Ireland in the 1920s and 1930s. It looks at how the Unionist government identified the propaganda possibilities of film and how unionist ideas fed into productions of the period. It focuses in particular on the films in which the local actor and singer Richard Hayward was involved. Although these 'quota quickies' have been generally regarded as musical comedies of little consequence, the discussion reveals how the films were informed by a concern to promote 'Ulster' as a distinct cultural entity. Through an analysis of the films themselves and the way in which they were received in Britain and the USA, the chapter suggests how the effort to elaborate a distinctive 'Ulster' imaginary failed due to the strength of already-existing conceptions of 'Irishness'.

While a few 'Ulster' films may have been made in this period, the bulk of films shown in Northern Ireland cinemas were, of course, mainly from Hollywood or Britain. Chapter 2 looks at local responses to this influx of films, focusing in particular on the religious and political controversies they generated. While hostility to the supposedly damaging effects of cinema was a common phenomenon across the USA and Europe, this chapter indicates how censorship campaigns assumed a distinctive character in Northern Ireland due to the unusual correlation between religion and politics that existed in the region. This led, for example, to the banning of films in Belfast that had been passed by the British (and Irish) censor, as well as direct involvement in censorship by the Unionist government in the case of films held to be 'subversive'.

Chapter 3 focuses on the role of film during the Second World War. It looks at how the Unionist regime achieved a degree of favourable wartime propaganda but generally failed to obtain the level of publicity that it would have liked as a result of the problems involved in mapping Northern Ireland onto the wartime construction of 'British' identity. This theme is pursued in the following chapter, which examines the attempts by the Unionist government to promote 'Ulster' through informational shorts and travelogues. The discussion identifies the frustrations faced by the Unionist regime in achieving the kind of 'official' image that it sought, as well as the emergence of 'unofficial' films that offered a 'reply' to the dominant cinematic constructions of 'Ulster'. Chapter 5 indicates how the battle between competing sets of images continued into the 1960s and how, despite the increasing emphasis upon 'modernity' within state-sponsored films, the continuation of economic and religious divisions within Northern Ireland began to become manifest. This chapter also indicates how the 'battleground' began to shift towards television following the arrival of TV in Northern Ireland during the 1950s. Although the programmes discussed were not shown in cinemas, they were nevertheless mostly shot on film and reflect an early blurring of the boundaries between the film and television mediums.

The final two chapters are slightly different in character. Although they preserve a loosely chronological order, they are more thematic, focusing respectively on the development of film policy and representations of the 'troubles'. Although much of the book is concerned with the use of film as an instrument of government propaganda, Chapter 6 focuses specifically on the development of state policy concerned with the cultural and economic aspects of film and the consequences that this had for film-making in the region. As this chapter indicates, the emergence of new policy initiatives laid the basis for an upsurge of film production the 1980s and 1990s and many of the films that resulted are considered in Chapter 7. Since the end of the

1960s, the imagery of Northern Ireland has been dominated by the 'troubles' and this chapter assesses the ways in which films have sought to dramatise the most recent phase of the conflict.[4] Given the huge growth in the number of films dealing with the 'troubles' since the 1970s, this discussion is necessarily less comprehensive than that relating to earlier periods. In contrast to the preceding chapters, the discussion is primarily focused on feature films (of which there have been considerably more in this period than any previously) and is also more selective in the films that it subjects to detailed analysis. Whereas there is very little written on the cinema and Northern Ireland prior to the 1970s, the discussion of representations of the 'troubles' has been much more extensive and there now exists a number of good surveys of the topic, as well as detailed assessments of individual films.[5] As a result, I have tried to avoid undue repetition of either my own or others' writing on the topic. Although this means that certain films are dealt with less fully than they might otherwise have been, it is intended that the discussion should do justice to the overall pattern of representations while nevertheless paying attention to some films that have been relatively neglected.

The book's strategy in this regard is to combine an investigation of the forgotten and the unfamiliar with some revisiting of work that is better known. If, by doing so, the book is able not only to add to existing scholarship but also to open up some new avenues of enquiry, then its purpose will have been served.

4. As Michael A. Hopkinson observes, the term the 'troubles' (or Troubles) is itself a 'beguiling euphemism' indicative of the problems involved in describing the nature of events in Ireland during 1916–23, as well as in the North since the outbreak of violence in 1969. See 'The Troubles', in Brian Lalor (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2003), p. 1080.

5. My first attempt to think through these issues appeared in Kevin Rockett, Luke Gibbons and John Hill, *Cinema and Ireland* (London: Routledge, 1988), ch. 6. Since this book appeared, there has not only been a lot of new films but also new writing on the subject. Two of the most useful surveys may be found in Martin McLoone, *Irish Film: The Emergence of a Contemporary Cinema* (London: BFI, 2000), ch. 3, and Ruth Barton, *Irish National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2004), ch. 10. Brian McIlroy offers a more polemical viewpoint in *Shooting to Kill: Filmmaking and the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 1998).

1

‘Ulster must be made soft and romantic’

Northern Ireland Film-making in the 1920s and 1930s

The beginnings of local film production in Northern Ireland occurred in the 1930s, when a number of features involving the local actor and singer Richard Hayward were made. The first of these was *The Luck of the Irish*, made in 1935, followed by *The Early Bird* (1936), *Irish and Proud of It* (1936) and *Devil’s Rock* (1938). Partly because they have been difficult to see, and partly because they were cheaply and quickly made, these films have commonly been seen as historical oddities unworthy of sustained critical attention.[1] However, while it would be hard to mount a case for these films as ‘lost treasures’, they do possess considerable historical interest, not only because they were the first feature films to be shot in Northern Ireland but also because of what they reveal about the political and cultural concerns of the period. When they are viewed in context, it is apparent that the films did not emerge out of the blue but grew out of, and contributed to, more general ideological and cultural currents. For, while these films were not ‘propaganda’, they did enjoy the semi-official support of the state. Moreover, in the way that they sought to represent Northern Ireland on screen, it is also evident that they were influenced by, and overlapped with, other attempts to ‘imagine’ a distinct Northern Irish – or ‘Ulster’ – identity during this period.

‘A fertile ground for propaganda’: film and the promotion of Northern Ireland

Given the turbulence of the early years of the Northern Ireland state, it was unlikely that it would devote much attention to a policy for film production. However, precisely because of the threatened status of the new regime (and the success of unionism during the Home Rule period in exploiting possibilities for propaganda), the Unionist government (elected in May 1921) did appreciate the value of favourable media publicity. Apart from a short period during 1926 and 1927, however, it avoided engaging directly in publicity (at least until 1938 when it opened the Ulster Office in London) and opted to lend support to bodies that were nominally independent. The most important of these, during the early years, was the Ulster Association (For Peace With Honour), which was established in April 1922 to encourage ‘a better understanding of Ulster at home and abroad’ and to support ‘the Prime Minister and Government in the resolute

1. The films only became available for viewing again in 1995, when the British Film Institute, in response to requests from the Northern Ireland Film Council, struck new prints for the Centenary of Cinema celebrations.

stand they were making against the attacks on the constitution assured by the Government of Ireland Act'.[2] Although the Association was funded by local businesses, the Unionist Prime Minister, James Craig, was its President and the organisation acted as a semi-official mouthpiece of government. The Association appointed a Director of Publicity, established offices in Belfast and London, and distributed news and information favourable to the new regime across Britain. Thus, by the close of its first year of activities, the organisation claimed to have secured 60,000 columns of information on Northern Ireland in the world's press, and distributed 10,000 'Ulster Publications'.[3] Following the abandonment of the Boundary Commission and subsequent agreement on the border issue in 1925, the Association felt that its propaganda goal had been accomplished and transferred its publicity activities (and London office) to the Ministry of Commerce in 1926. However, given the drain on public expenditure involved in maintaining social services on a par with the rest of the UK, the government came to the conclusion that the cost of sustaining the operation was too high and opted, the following year, to cease its activities in this area and confine its funding to the Ulster Tourist Development Association (UTDA).

This was not as peculiar a decision as it might initially appear. The UTDA was, in fact, the brainchild of the Ulster Association, which had launched the organisation at a conference in January 1924. Robert Baillie, the Chair of the Association's publicity committee, also became the UTDA's first chairman. Although the organisation's purpose was to foster and develop 'tourist traffic in Northern Ireland by advertising the advantages and amenities of the various districts', its close connections with government and the Ulster Association also meant that its promotion of tourism could assume a more directly political character.[4] Thus, an early UTDA pamphlet distributed in America was attacked in the Northern Ireland House of Commons by the Nationalist MP, Patrick O'Neill, as 'nothing more than propaganda for the Presbyterian Church'.[5]

Although the UTDA's ventures into film were primarily concerned with promoting awareness of Northern Ireland as a tourist location, this too could take on a political dimension. As early as 1912, James Craig had recognised the propaganda value of film newsreels by arranging for the recording – 'under the fierce glare of electric light and to the click of a dozen cinematograph machines' – of the signing of the Ulster Covenant by Edward Carson and others on 'Ulster Day'.[6] The Ulster Association had also helped to organise the filming of the opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament in 1921.[7] Given these precedents, the UTDA was also keen to encourage the newsreel companies to visit Northern Ireland and scored a particular publicity success in 1930

2. 'Government Publicity: Short Résumé since 1922', Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) CAB9F/123/14.
3. Ibid.
4. *Irish News*, 31 January 1924, p. 7.
5. Parliament of Northern Ireland, *Parliamentary Debates: Official Report*, House of Commons (HC), vol. vii, col. 1039, 6 May 1926.
6. *Northern Whig*, 30 September 1912, p. 5. For a discussion of Craig's role in promoting Unionism at this time, see Alvin Jackson, 'Unionist Myths 1912–1985', *Past and Present*, no. 136, 1992.
7. The Ulster Association (For Peace With Honour), *Annual Report 1922–3* (Belfast, 1923), PRONI CAB6/93.

when several companies (including Gaumont, Pathé and British Movietone) despatched units to cover the newly established Tourist Trophy Motor Car Race on the Ards circuit.[8] The following year, the UTDA also used the occasion of the motor race to arrange the filming of Craig (now Viscount Craigavon) and members of the Cabinet at Parliament Buildings by newsreel cameramen, including representatives from British Movietone News and British Paramount.[9] Craigavon himself was recorded delivering a four-minute speech that emphasised Northern Ireland's 'prosperity' as well as its links with America and safety as a place to visit.[10] However, this seems to have been a relatively unusual occurrence and, while the newsreels did continue to cover Northern Ireland stories, these generally dealt with sporting events rather than overtly political matters.

In addition to the newsreels, the UTDA was also active in encouraging film-makers to include Northern Ireland in various travelogues. In 1927, they helped Sydney Cook of Queensland to complete a film on Northern Ireland that, it was claimed, was destined to be shown in 800 Australian cinemas.[11] In 1928, they also assisted Pathé to film material for the *Pathé Pictorial* series and Gaumont for its cinemagazine, *Gaumont Mirror* (which included footage of the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge, the glens of Antrim and the mountains of Mourne).[12] In 1932, the Executive Committee of the UTDA also agreed to contribute £100 towards the Northern Ireland section of what later became known as *The Voice of Ireland*, written and directed by Lieutenant-Colonel Victor Haddick.[13] This is commonly taken to be the first indigenous sound feature to be made in Ireland although the shooting of the film was in fact silent, with sound added later in a London studio.[14]

Haddick was himself from the North, born in Donaghdee and educated at Royal Belfast Academical Institution. After a military career in the Leinster Regiment, he was involved in the Everest expedition of 1924, in which Irvine and Mallory both lost their lives. Along with Captain J. B. L. Noel, he made a film record of the expedition, and further filming ventures followed, including *India, Past and Present*, *Romance of Turkey* and *Ireland's Rough-Hewn Destiny*. Somewhat ironically, the contents of this last film had already given rise to controversy due to the small number of scenes relating to the North. For while Haddick himself claimed that the film dealt with 'the agricultural districts of the whole country and not only the Free State', this did not prevent questions being raised in the British House of Commons concerning the involvement of the Empire Marketing Board (which had been established by the British government in 1926 to encourage Empire trade).[15] The Northern Ireland government also felt it was a mistake for

8. *The Bioscope*, 27 August 1930, p. 41.
9. Letter from C. W. S. Magill, Secretary and Organiser of the UTDA, to C. H. E. Blackmore, Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, 13 August 1931, PRONI CAB9F/114/1.
10. 'Interview between the Prime Minister and the Cabinet and the Representatives of the Various Film Corporations', PRONI CAB9F/114/1.
11. *The Bioscope*, 15 December 1927, p. 55; *Belfast Telegraph*, 23 February 1928.
12. *Irish News,* 13 March 1928, p. 6; Minutes of UTDA Council of Management, 19 July 1928, PRONI TOUR1/1/1.
13. Minutes of UTDA Executive Committee, 12 May 1932, PRONI TOUR1/1/1.
14. Richard Hayward, 'The First Talkie Made in Ireland', *Ulster Illustrated*, vol. 6, no. 5, July 1958, p. 16.
15. *Belfast Telegraph*, 19 December 1929, p. 7; *Parliamentary Debates* (HC), vol. v, col. 449, 11 December 1929. In response to questioning, the Under-Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, Mr Lunn, indicated that the EMB had not actually produced the film but only approved it for inclusion in their programme of lectures.

the EMB to have been associated with a film that was mainly devoted to the south.[16] There was, therefore, suspicion of political interference when a screening of the film, and accompanying lecture by Haddick, at the Imperial Institute in London in 1929 was cancelled. According to the papers at the time, the organisers of the event, the Irish Literary Society, had been forced to cancel due to the conditions laid down by the Institute, which included the playing of the British national anthem and a prohibition on Irish pipers and vocalists.[17]

Like *Ireland's Rough-Hewn Destiny*, *The Voice of Ireland* mainly deals with the South. However, as a result of the UTDA's involvement, it does include a substantial section set in the North. According to the *Belfast News-Letter*, about one-third of the picture is devoted to Northern Ireland and each of the six counties is featured.[18] The story of the film is loosely concerned with the return to his native land of an exile, whose travels take him to the four provinces of Ireland, including Ulster. In the scenes set in Northern Ireland, Richard Hayward assumes what he subsequently described as the 'The Voice of Ulster', visiting various locations, performing a number of Ulster songs and providing a spoken commentary.[19] In the few minutes of footage that have survived, this includes stops at various tourist sites (including the Giant's Causeway), a song in 'the sweet town of Coleraine' and short sequences of shots of Belfast ('the Athens of the North') and Bangor ('Belfast's Blackpool').

Although the UTDA had some reservations about the technical standard of the film, it was nevertheless well received when it was premiered in Belfast in November 1932. The *Belfast News-Letter* described the film as 'an unqualified success', while the *Irish News* declared that '[t]he songs, the instrumental music, and the dialogue are undoubtedly a treat'.[20] This encouraged the UTDA to establish a special Film Publicity Committee (chaired by Robert Baillie) the following year. Identifying 'the picture theatres' as 'a fertile ground for propaganda', this committee then resolved to produce its own 'really first-class film' about Northern Ireland.[21] They entered into discussions with G. B. Instructional, a subsidiary of Gaumont British, which proposed a film along the lines of *Contact* (1933), Paul Rotha's famous documentary charting the air journey between London and Cape Town. This was screened in Belfast in early 1934 and was favourably received by UTDA Council members. Unlikely though it may seem in retrospect, the Association was also assured that Rotha – subsequently to become well known for left-wing documentaries such as

16. Letter from W. D. Scott, Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Commerce, to C. H. E. Blackmore, 3 April 1930, PRONI CAB9F/114/1.

17. *Belfast Telegraph*, 19 December 1929, p. 7; *Belfast News-Letter*, 19 December 1929, p. 8. The traditionally unionist daily paper, the *Belfast News-Letter* (founded 1737), has, in recent years, dropped both the hyphen in 'News-Letter' and the name 'Belfast' from its masthead. For the sake of consistency, I have used the hyphenated version of the paper's name throughout the text.

18. *Belfast News-Letter*, 11 November 1932, p. 6.

19. Hayward, 'The First Talkie', p. 16.

20. *Belfast News-Letter*, 11 November 1932, p. 6; *Irish News*, 11 November 1932, p. 3. The nationalist *Irish News*, published in the North, did nevertheless comment that the 'popular use of Derry for Londonderry . . . would have caught the local atmosphere better'.

21. 'Proposed Ulster Film Publicity', 1934, PRONI COM62/1/392.

World of Plenty (1943) – was available if terms could be agreed.[22] However, the Association found the cost (between £1,000 and £2,000) of such a film prohibitive and when it seemed likely that the Belfast-born director Brian Desmond Hurst would shoot part of the feature *The Night Nurse* (subsequently known as *Irish Hearts* in Europe and *Nora O'Neale* in the USA) in Northern Ireland, it was decided to place the plans 'in abeyance'.[23] It was only in 1937, when the UTDA launched a Film Fund, that the proposal for the organisation's own Northern Ireland film was revived. In the intervening period, it continued to encourage film companies to visit Northern Ireland and provided support to the features involving Richard Hayward, which were also assisted by the Ulster Industries Development Association (UIDA).

The origins of this body lay in a speech made by the Prime Minister at the Londonderry Chamber of Commerce in February 1929 urging local tradespeople to sell Ulster-manufactured products, and advocating the slogan 'We Push Ulster Goods'.[24] Subsequently, the Ministry of Commerce sought to give practical effect to the Prime Minister's slogan and agreed to finance a new body, the UIDA, established in June 1929. The body's main aims consisted of attracting 'new industrial undertakings to Northern Ireland' and fostering 'home industries by urging a more extended consumption of home manufactured goods'.[25] The first of these goals proved a difficult one for the organisation (particularly during the trade depression of 1930 and 1931) with the result that the bulk of its energies were devoted to the promotion of 'Ulster goods' through various forms of promotion and 'propaganda'. This included the launch of 'Ulster Shopping Weeks', window-dressing competitions, press advertising and the production of circulars and booklets. The Association was also responsible for the creation of a fictional character 'Andy McDade', a County Antrim farmer who encourages his wife Mary to buy more Ulster produce. A pamphlet, *Andy McDade*, containing a short story about Andy and Mary written in Ulster dialect, a list of local products and a description of the Association's aims was widely distributed in 1929. Articles by 'Andy McDade' also appeared in local papers and, in recognition of the importance of 'the weemin' o' Ulster' to the campaign's success, a second pamphlet, *Andy's Mary*, in which Mary goes shopping for Ulster goods, was published the following year.[26]

The UIDA's interest in film followed on from this. Film not only constituted an industrial activity that was new to Northern Ireland but also provided an effective and 'up-to-date' vehicle for the promotion of 'Ulster goods'.[27] It was on this basis that the UIDA lent its support to the Richard Hayward films and even embarked upon a short film of its own, *The Star of Ulster*

22. Ibid. A prestige production for Imperial Airways and the film's funders Shell-Mex, *Contact* was, nevertheless, largely celebratory in character.

23. Minutes of UTDA Executive Committee, 14 June 1934, PRONI TOUR1/1/2. The film was based on a popular novel about hospital life written by J. Johnston Abraham, a surgeon originally from Coleraine. Although part of the film was shot in Dublin, it does not appear as if the proposed filming in the North took place.

24. *Northern Whig*, 1 February 1929, p. 7.

25. 'Ulster Industries Development Association: Note on its Establishment and Functions', 5 April 1932, PRONI CAB9F/108/1.

26. *Belfast News-Letter*, 16 September 1930, p. 5. According to the *Banbridge Chronicle* (6 May 1931), reporting on the UIDA annual lunch, no less than 237,000 copies of the pamphlet were circulated.

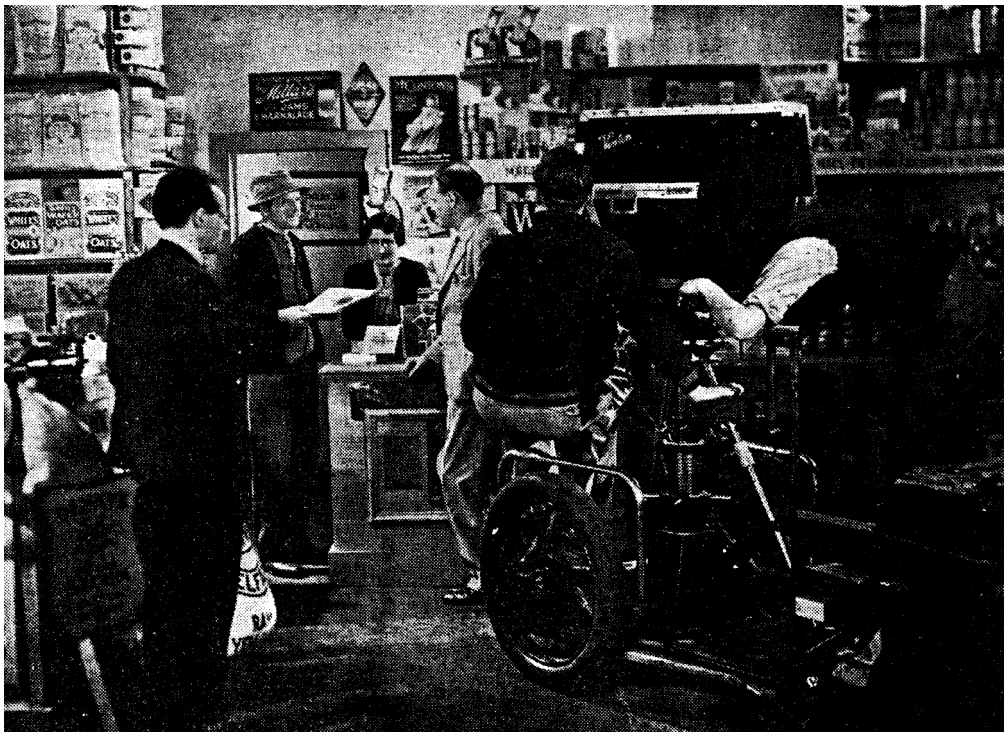
27. Ulster Industries Development Association, *Annual Review 1936*, PRONI COM62/1/187.

(1936). The film was designed to promote the organisation's Star Associate scheme, launched in 1935. This scheme encouraged members of the public to 'give first preference to Ulster-made Goods' and to wear the UIDA's Star Emblem, a six-pointed badge intended to represent the six counties of 'Ulster'.[28] Hayward wrote the script and music and also appeared in the film as Andy McDade.[29]

The film itself is set in a village shop in which, according to one contemporary review, 'apparently only Ulster goods are stocked'.[30] The shop is run by a widow, Mrs Milligan (played by Richard Hayward's first wife, Elma Hayward), from whom Andy McDade seeks credit. According to the *Northern Whig*, these 'efforts give opportunity for Ulster vernacular humour' and, as the characters conduct their conversation, 'the camera picks up the many products displayed in the shop'.[31] Andy then inspects some 'Ulster Star' badges and brooches before launching into a song called 'The Star of Ulster'. As he does so, yet more goods are shown. The song also explains the meaning of the star ('It stands for Ulster exports, To Lands across the foam, For Ulster foods and Ulster goods, In ev'ry Ulster home') and encourages members of the audience to wear it ('So please to give this Ulster Star, A place in your lapel, As token of your duty, All Ulster trade to swell'). Once the song is finished, Andy's efforts are rewarded by Mrs Milligan, who provides him with 'one of the wee stars' and a couple of ounces of tobacco. The film was given a special screening in Belfast in January 1937 and was subsequently shown in cinemas across Northern Ireland where it was promoted as 'an Ulster film with Ulster Players for Ulster's Prosperity'.[32]

However, although the UTDA and the UIDA both supported film-making (and, in the case of the Hayward productions, the same films), their aims did not entirely converge. Prior to the establishment of the UIDA, the Ministry of Commerce had sought to encourage the UTDA to take on industrial development functions but the UTDA had considered this undesirable.[33] The Ministry had also encouraged the organisation to consider making a film that might involve the promotion of local industry but this too proved problematic. Following the Belfast screening of *Contact*, the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Commerce, W. D. Scott, was impressed with how the film had shown 'machinery in motion, and people at work' and believed that a similar Northern Irish film, containing a similar industrial element, would make 'very striking propaganda'.

28. UIDA, *Annual Review 1935*, PRONI COM62/1/187.
29. Although the original Andy McDade pamphlets are uncredited, it seems likely that Hayward also wrote these.
30. *Belfast Telegraph*, 22 January 1937, p. 8.
31. *Northern Whig*, 23 January 1937, p. 9.
32. *Irish Times*, 17 May 1937, p. 2.
33. Memorandum, 'Ulster Industries Development Association: Note on its Establishment and Functions', 5 April 1932, PRONI CAB9F/108/1. It is also worth noting that, although Craigavon was the UIDA's patron and champion, the organisation did not enjoy the unanimous backing of government. In 1937, for example, the Minister of Finance, Hugh Pollock, declared his lack of sympathy for 'this theory that seems to be shouted on all occasions "Use only Ulster Goods"' (*Parliamentary Debates* [HC], vol. xix, col. 635, 18 March 1937). Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon and Henry Patterson explain this divergence of outlook in terms of a division within unionism between the 'minor' capitalist interests – represented by organisations such as the UIDA – and the interests of 'big' capital, such as linen and shipbuilding. See *The State in Northern Ireland 1921–72* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979), p. 85.



Pushing 'Ulster Goods': Richard Hayward as Andy McDade in *The Star of Ulster*

But while he believed 'magnificent things' could be achieved with Northern Irish 'shipyards and linen mills', he found the UTDA reluctant to get 'entangled with industry'.[34] This does, of course, make sense in terms of the UTDA's remit to promote tourism, which typically relies upon discourses of 'escape' from the pressures of modern urban-industrial society. However, it also connects with a particular form of imagining of 'Ulster' prevalent during this period that pulled against this kind of representation of the industrial and urban.

Imagining 'Ulster'

In seeking to encourage visitors to 'Ulster', the UTDA was not only involved in cultivating an attractive image of the region but also negotiating the representation of Northern Ireland's status and identity. There were two significant aspects to this. On the one hand, while Northern Ireland continued to be part of the United Kingdom, the Unionist regime was continually beset by the indifference of the British public and politicians towards it and the problems that this created in being accepted as legitimately 'British'. As a result, the regime was continually con-

34. Minute sheet, 8 February 1934, PRONI COM62/1/392. The government did, however, provide some support for this kind of publicity through its support for the Irish Linen Guild, which funded the promotional film *The Wee Blue Blossom*, which was widely shown, in an abbreviated form, in the US.

cerned to establish its 'British' credentials and emphasise, as Craigavon himself put it, that they were not a 'separate people' but 'full-born fellow-citizens of the United Kingdom and immensely proud of it'.[35] At the same time (and interlinked with this desire for 'Britishness'), the regime was also at pains to disavow its 'Irishness' and to assert its cultural distinctiveness from the rest of Ireland. This in turn encouraged an emphasis upon the peculiar cultural character of Ulster.

As Alvin Jackson suggests, the mobilisation of a distinct cultural identity for Ulster gained particular momentum at the time of the third Home Rule Bill in 1912 when the principle of partition was effectively conceded and northern and southern strands of unionism began to diverge. Jackson indicates how at the 1892 Ulster Convention in Belfast, planned to boost Unionist morale, it was still possible for unionism to combine images of 'Celtic revivalism with the iconography of British patriotism' in order to demonstrate how 'a true Irish patriotism was compatible with the imperial connection'.[36] However, after 1912, by which time the maintenance of an all-Ireland Unionist unity had become increasingly fraught (and the idea of 'Irishness' itself had become increasingly associated with cultural nationalism), a distinctive Ulster political and literary culture began to take shape in the form of political tracts, novels and 'Ulster' histories. According to Ian McBride, this was also the period during which 'the invention of "Ulster" as a separate entity' occurred.[37] For McBride, however, this was only a temporary phenomenon and once partition was achieved, he argues, the Unionist government did not attempt to embark upon a 'cultural policy of Ulsterisation'.[38] Whereas Irish nationalism had been fuelled by a cultural vision that legitimated its claim to independent statehood, Ulster Unionism had constructed an ideology of 'Ulster' in order to resist Home Rule rather than to express a positive identity. Once partition was achieved, therefore, the political necessity of 'Ulsterisation' could be said to have passed. However, the unionists had also acquired a semi-state that they had not sought and for which they were, in a sense, culturally under-prepared. Thus, while the preoccupation with the elaboration of an 'Ulster' identity may have lost some of its political urgency in the post-partition period, the idea of Ulster's cultural distinctiveness remained attractive to unionists not only as a means of bolstering Northern Ireland's new political status but also as a response to both the institutionalisation of – Gaelic and Catholic – nationalism in the South and the continuing ambivalence of Northern Ireland's political and cultural relationship to Britain. Thus, in spite of their initial reluctance to accept partition, Unionists soon came, as J. C. Beckett explains, 'to congratulate themselves on their semi-independence' and to develop 'a sort of "Ulster patriotism"'.[39]

One aspect of this was the Unionist regime's preference for referring to Northern Ireland as 'Ulster'. This was, of course, inaccurate: the historical province of Ulster consisted of nine counties (Antrim, Armagh, Cavan, Donegal, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, Monaghan and

35. 'Foreword', *London Chamber of Commerce Journal*, September 1928, PRONI CAB7F/123/2.

36. Alvin Jackson, 'Irish Unionist Imagery, 1850–1920', in Eve Patten (ed.), *Returning to Ourselves: Second Volume of Papers from the John Hewitt International Summer School* (Belfast: Lagan Press, 1995), p. 353.

37. Ian McBride, 'Ulster and the British Problem', in Richard English and Graham Walker (eds), *Unionism in Modern Ireland: New Perspectives on Politics and Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p. 7.

38. Ibid., p. 11.

39. J. C. Beckett, 'Northern Ireland', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1971, p. 130.

Tyrone) whereas the state of Northern Ireland included only six (with Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan forming part of the newly created Irish Free State). However, precisely because the term 'Ulster' helped to differentiate the North from the rest of Ireland, unionists were perfectly happy after partition to use the term to describe only the six counties. According to Oliver MacDonagh, the 'new "Ulster" of the northern Protestants forgot that Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan had ever been part of their province' and, through 'common usage' of the word 'Ulster', sought to sustain the idea of 'an inviolable territory'.[40] This is apparent, for example, in the semi-official document *Ulster*, produced by the UTDA, which confidently claims that '[t]o all intents and purposes . . . the traditional name of "Ulster" and the new political term "Northern Ireland" are synonymous in the public mind'.[41] This was not, of course, uncontroversial. Recognising how the recurring use of the term had the effect of reinforcing the North's separation from the rest of the island, the Dublin government actively sought to counteract the word's 'misuse'.[42] The British government was also loath to permit the Northern Ireland regime to change the name of the state to 'Ulster' when this was proposed by Northern Ireland's third Prime Minister, Sir Basil Brooke, in 1948.[43] Nevertheless, the idea of 'Ulster' as a distinct place, separate from the rest of Ireland, continued to retain its potency for northern unionists.

However, while the term acquired a degree of common currency (reinforced by its embodiment in the titles of organisations such as the UTDA and UIDA), it did not necessarily carry with it any agreed content beyond the parameters of geographical boundaries. Indeed, for Brian Graham, the problem historically of unionism has been its failure to create 'an agreed representation – or imagery – of place to legitimate and validate their domicile in the island of Ireland'.[44] Although he suggests that 'Ulster' is 'a representation of place' that has 'yet to be imagined', this is not really so. As previously indicated, there have been various attempts from within unionism to 'imagine' 'Ulster' as a distinctive place. The difficulty for unionism has been that no one version of 'Ulster' identity has achieved hegemony and that any construction of it has had to contend with alternative accounts of the place's identity as 'British' or 'Irish'. As a result, the 'imagining' of 'Ulster' has typically proven not only a highly contentious but also an ideologically problematic enterprise.

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40. Oliver MacDonagh, *States of Mind: A Study of Anglo-Irish Conflict 1780–1980* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), pp. 26, 22.

41. *Ulster* (Belfast: UTDA, 1937), p. 15.

42. Sean McDougall, 'The Projection of Northern Ireland to Great Britain and Abroad, 1921–39', in Peter Catterrall and Sean McDougall (eds), *The Northern Ireland Question in British Politics* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p. 35. In the early days, there was also some resistance from diehard unionists who regarded the abandonment of the other three counties as 'treachery'. It was on this basis that the Earl of Belmore referred to the practice of describing the Six Counties as Ulster as 'abominable' when objecting to Fermanagh County Council's funding of the UTDA at a meeting in 1929. See 'Not Ulster', *Northern Whig*, 5 October 1929, p. 7.

43. See Ronan Fanning, 'The Response of the London and Belfast Governments to the Declaration of the Republic of Ireland, 1948-9', *International Affairs*, vol. 58, no. 1, 1981/2.

44. Brian Graham, 'Ulster: A Representation of Place yet to be Imagined', in Peter Shirlow and Mark McGovern (eds), *Who are 'The People'? Unionism, Protestantism and Loyalism in Northern Ireland* (London: Pluto, 1997), p. 34.

Some of the forces at work here may be found in tourist literature of the 1930s, produced by the UTDA at the same time as it was supporting the production of film. Tourism was not only an activity of financial importance for the economically fragile Unionist regime but also helped to reinforce a sense of tangible links between Northern Ireland and Britain. Thus, the Minister of Finance, Hugh Pollock, appealed to the reality of tourist visits from Britain to Northern Ireland as evidence of the increasing ties between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom in an article in *The Spectator* in 1930.[45] However, even in a period when most tourism was still primarily domestic, there was an awareness on the part of the UTDA that Northern Ireland was not necessarily perceived by potential British tourists as a part of the UK. As a result, potential visitors from England, Scotland and Wales are assured in tourist literature and promotions that they will not have to contend with customs formalities, passports or motor regulations and that a holiday in Ulster 'offers all the advantages of a trip abroad without the disadvantages' of 'a journey to another country'.[46] However, while the practical realities of Ulster's 'Britishness' may be stressed, the literature is also faced with the problem of convincing its readership of Ulster's Britishness at a more profound level. This is because, as James Loughlin has suggested, the 'dominant image' of Northern Ireland – 'largely industrial and with associations of bigotry, sectarianism and political extremism' – was significantly at odds with the British self-image of 'humour, tolerance, and compromise' and the association of contemporary Britishness with ideas of rural 'organicism' (as found in the speeches and writings of Stanley Baldwin).[47]

The stress on Ulster's rural identity contained in tourist literature therefore served a double purpose: it not only suited the aim of attracting visitors but also distracted from the political turbulence and sectarianism commonly associated with urban-industrial areas (and Belfast, in particular). Thus, from the beginning, the publicity produced by the UTDA was at pains to downplay the industrial character of Northern Ireland in a way that went beyond the requirements of mere tourist promotion. The Belfast-born writer St John Ervine was recruited to write the first travel guide, *Ulster*, for the UTDA in 1926 and, in this, he is eager to stress that Ulster, contrary to popular perception, is 'not mainly an industrial, but . . . an agricultural province'.[48] In 1932, writing in the *Daily Mail*, he was still making substantially the same point:

> Another legend almost religiously believed by Englishmen is that Northern Ireland is almost entirely industrialised, a sort of extended Black Country or prolonged Manchester . . . But this legend of

45. *The Spectator*, 15 March 1930, p. 417.

46. Viscount Craigavon, 'Foreword', *Ulster* (Belfast: UTDA, 1937), p. 14; *Daily Mail*, 5 July 1932.

47. James Loughlin, *Ulster Unionism and British National Identity since 1885* (London: Pinter, 1995), pp. 98–100. There is a certain oddity here given the advanced industrialisation and urbanisation of Britain and England in particular. However, as Alun Howkins argues, one of the central tensions of English culture has been between 'a recognition of the urban nature of England and English society . . . and a wish to preserve what is essentially a cultural fiction that England retains its "rural" character'. See 'Rurality and English Identity', in David Morley and Kevin Robbins (eds), *British Cultural Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 146.

48. St John Ervine, *Ulster* (Belfast: UTDA, 1926), p. 5.

> an industrial Ulster is peculiarly silly, since Ulster is largely an agricultural community, with . . . some of the loveliest and most diversified scenery that is to be found in the world.[49]

Ervine was a complex character who had initially shown Home Rule sympathies but, following the War of Independence, had become aggressively pro-Union and anti-South.[50] His disavowal of the 'legend of an industrial Ulster', and reclaiming of rural 'Ulster', therefore, amounted to far more than tourist puff but was intimately connected to a broader political and cultural struggle over place and territory. This is particularly evident in his short introduction to Richard Hayward's collection, *Ulster Songs and Ballads of the Town and Country* (1925), in which he records his dismay at English stereotypes of the Ulsterman as 'dour, harsh, humourless, unkindly, and uncouth', 'deeply absorbed in the making of money' and 'almost destitute of culture and charm'. For Ervine, these misplaced perceptions were linked to a reluctance by the English to accept that there are 'beautiful places in the North of Ireland' and not just in the 'south and west'. Linking character with place in this way, he is then led to the conclusion that a 'disbelief in the beauty of Ulster' rests upon 'a political foundation'.[51] For Ervine, therefore, the need to challenge stereotypes of the 'Ulsterman' involved a battle on two fronts: counteracting negative English attitudes towards 'Ulster' on the one hand while reclaiming the South's apparent monopoly on natural beauty (and its associated characteristics) on the other. However, given that the Irish countryside was in a sense already 'spoken for' by both metropolitan discourses of the periphery and cultural nationalism, this was a project that would inevitably prove difficult.

As various writers have noted, there is a long association of Ireland and 'Irishness' with ideas and images of the rural. Luke Gibbons, for example, has identified the importance of European Romanticism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in imagining Ireland as a primitive, if picturesque, contrast to modern urban-industrial society.[52] Martin McLoone, moreover, has indicated how 'this Romantic primitiveness' became 'internalised in Ireland itself'. As he explains, '[t]he combination of a rural utopia, a simple but moral peasantry, and the intimations of the sublime, perfectly suited the religious/political alliance that fuelled Catholic nationalism towards the end of the nineteenth century'.[53] As a result, this identification of Irish nationalism with the rural was des-

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49. St John Ervine, 'Northern Ireland for the Holidays', *Daily Mail*, 5 July 1932, p. 10. Lord Rothermere, the owner of the *Daily Mail*, was a staunch ally of the Unionist cause who himself contributed an essay ('The Ideal Ten-Days Motor Tour') to the UTDA publication *Ulster for the Motorist* (Belfast, 1936).
50. In addition to his plays and novels, he was the author of a book on the Unionist leader Sir Edward Carson and was given official support in writing a biography of Craigavon. This, however, was later withdrawn due to the extremity of some of his views on the South. For further discussion, see Gillian McIntosh, *The Force of Culture: Unionist Identities in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1999), ch. 5.
51. St John Ervine, 'Introduction', Richard Hayward, *Ulster Songs and Ballads of the Town and Country* (London: Duckworth, 1925), pp. 7–9.
52. Luke Gibbons, 'Romanticism, Realism and Irish Cinema', in Kevin Rockett, Luke Gibbons and John Hill, *Cinema and Ireland* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 194–257.
53. Martin McLoone, 'The Primitive Image', in Eve Patten (ed.), *Returning to Ourselves*, p. 314. See also Maurice Goldring's discussion of 'The Myth of a Rural Civilisation', in *Faith of Our Fathers: The Formation of Irish Nationalist Ideology 1890–1920* (Dublin: Repsol, 1975), pp. 57–73.

tined to become the official ideology of the new Irish state, buttressing its belief in economic self-sufficiency, its leaning towards agriculture and strong suspicion of (urban-industrial) 'Britishness'.

Given this firm association between Irish nationalism and the land, the attempt to construct a distinctive 'Ulster' in terms of the rural proved difficult. Much of the economic basis of partition rested upon the industrial character of the north-east of Ireland and its close economic links with Britain and the British Empire. The modern character of Unionism, and its evolving 'Ulster' character, moreover, derived from the growing strength of industrial and mercantile capital over landed interests.[54] Thus, despite Ervine's claims that 'Ulster' was 'mainly an agricultural province', well over 60 per cent of the Northern Irish population lived either in Belfast or within a thirty-mile radius of the city in 1937.[55] Indeed, according to A. C. Hepburn, the city of Belfast is so much 'the symbol' of the area's 'claim to a distinct identity' that Northern Ireland may usefully be regarded as a 'city-region'.[56] If this is the case, then the attempt to downplay the urban-industrial character of Northern Ireland in favour of 'Ulster' ruralism inevitably exposed unionists to the risk of too close an identification with the forms of rural identity associated with Irish cultural nationalism.

One solution to this problem was an attempt to reconcile the imagery of the rural with the modern. As Martin McLoone has suggested, the acceptance and promotion of 'a romantic, rural sense of Irish identity' by cultural nationalism led to a rejection of not only 'the imperial definition of urban, industrial modernity but also the very notion of modernity itself'.[57] This was less so of the rural identity celebrated by Ulster unionists, however, which is characterised by a much more pronounced concern to divest the rural of the idea of 'primitiveness' and invest it with intimations of the modern. This is apparent, for example, in the poster – 'Come to Ulster, It's Jolly!' – which the UTDA commissioned from William Conor (then best known for his paintings and sketches of Belfast city life). This was intended for display in railway stations across Britain and was shown to the local press in January 1926. According to Conor the idea was:

> to get as far away from the conventional Irish poster of shawled peasant, white-washed, thatched cottage, and brown melancholy bog. The tourist did not come to Ulster to weep over the sorrows of Dark Rosaleen. Besides, Dark Rosaleen in the North had dried her tears long ago, and had a smile on her face, and very often wore silk stockings. Her house, or rather her father's house, was up-to-date. The visitor did not come here to rough it in discomfort.[58]

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54. For an influential, if not uncontested, statement of this argument, see Peter Gibbon, *The Origins of Ulster Unionism: The Formation of Popular Protestant Politics and Ideology in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975).
55. F. S. L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London: Fontana, 1973), p. 707. Lyons does note, however, that agriculture remained a significant source of employment.
56. A. C. Hepburn, *A Past Apart: Studies in the History of Catholic Belfast 1850–1950* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 1996), p. 142. Significantly, one of the apparent paradoxes that Hepburn is attempting to unpick is how the Catholics of urban Belfast came 'to identify with an all-Ireland nationalism which was distinctively rural, and sometimes positively anti-urban, in its ethos' (ibid., p. 145).
57. Martin McLoone, *Irish Film: The Emergence of a Contemporary Cinema* (London: BFI, 2000), p. 37.
58. *Belfast Telegraph*, 26 January 1926, p. 3. For more on Conor, see John Hewitt, *Art in Ulster 1557–1957* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1977), pp. 86–93.

The poster itself shows modern-looking young girls dancing against a scenic backdrop intended 'to give an impression of life and youth against a typical Ulster background'.[59] The association of youthful femininity (in the form of the 'flapper') with the modernity of Ulster became yet more pronounced in subsequent UTDA posters, even becoming the subject of a debate in 1929, when a local judge called upon the organisation to 'give the girls a rest for a while'.[60]

A similar concern with modernity was also apparent in Richard Hayward's remarks concerning the 'realism' of the films with which he was involved and his desire to show 'Ulster life as it is known to Ulster people'.[61] While it may seem odd that what now look like rather quaint musical comedies should have ever been regarded as realistic, Hayward's claims for them make sense in terms of his concern to avoid the representation of Ulster as backward and primitive. The 'realism' of the films, in this respect, should be understood as intertextual, emerging in relation to pre-existing conventions and stereotypes rather than absolute standards. Thus, during a promotional trip to North America, Hayward sought to differentiate his work from what he regarded as the dominant image of 'the stage Irishman' – 'a clown with a pipestick in his cap' – and attacked Robert Flaherty's *Man of Aran* (1934) for its depiction of 'the Isle of Aran' as 'the last place God made'. 'There could scarcely be the shortage of supplies and the terrible primitiveness which the film showed,' Hayward went on. 'After all, Aran possesses an excellent hotel, fully equipped in the modern manner. There are motor roads and the place is haunted by tourists.'[62] While it has been argued that *Man of Aran*'s bleak vision matched the ideology of frugal self-sufficiency that characterised the Free State at that time, it was much less suited to the North, where, despite the economic problems, it remained important for unionists to demonstrate the economic viability of the state (as well as its economic superiority over the rest of Ireland) if it was to survive. Unlike *Man of Aran*, therefore, Hayward was concerned that *The Luck of the Irish* should not expel the traces of modernity from its representation of rural life. Indeed, during the making of the film, Hayward reported that there had been an argument over the filming of a bus (seen arriving in the village at the start of the film). While studio personnel had apparently wanted 'a decrepit affair with a drunken driver', they were eventually persuaded otherwise by tales of the efficiency of the Northern Ireland Road Transport Board![63]

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59. *Irish News*, 2 October 1929.

60. Letter to *Belfast News-Letter*, 27 September 1929. In her discussion of the Hollywood actress Colleen Moore, Diane Negra suggests how her image as 'The Modern Girl' in the 1920s connects with the growing assimilation of the Irish into American society. See *Off-White Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom* (London: Routledge, 2001), ch. 2. Within Ireland itself, however, it was – as the tourist posters indicate – northern unionism, rather than southern nationalism, that was ideologically more likely to promote not only modernity but also its association with changing models of femininity.

61. Richard Hayward quoted in *Irish News*, 5 September 1935, p. 2.

62. *Montreal Gazette*, 30 April 1936.

63. *Irish Independent*, 14 December 1935. Significantly, in the Northern Ireland guide book *Ulster* (1937), the Northern Ireland Road Transport Board encourages visitors to 'see Ulster' in 'comfort supreme' from 'luxuriously equipped' coaches.