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Explaining *Uladh*: cultural nationalism in Ulster¹

Marnie Hay

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a group of young people from Belfast banded together in an attempt to bring the province of Ulster into the Irish Literary Revival. They began in 1902 with the foundation of an amateur drama company that later became known as the Ulster Literary Theatre (ULT). Then they expanded into print with *Uladh* (also known as *Ulad*), a literary and critical magazine that appeared four times between November 1904 and September 1905. Although *Uladh* was modelled on W.B. Yeats' theatre journals *Beltaine* and *Samhain*, it differed from its models in two ways: it focused on Ulster, and it covered a far wider range of cultural topics than theatre. The magazine, however, was caught between a dismissive unionism and a southern Irish nationalism that disregarded Ulster's special circumstances. At the time of its inception, some critics misunderstood it because of its blatant regionalism. Due to its cultural nationalism, a wider Ulster audience in 1904-5, as well as Northern Irish literary critics during the so-called regional revival of the 1940s and 1950s, dismissed the magazine.

In the past, researchers have used *Uladh* as a tool to assist in the study of the ULT. This article is the first to examine the magazine as a subject in its own right. An idealistic exercise in constructive criticism and cultural propaganda, *Uladh* urged the people of Ulster to set aside bigotry and to value both economic *and* cultural pursuits, in order to take their rightful place in an Ireland that embraced its regional differences. Designed to advance the Ulster branch of the Irish Literary Revival in particular and the cause of cultural nationalism in general, *Uladh* attempted to explain Ulster to its own people and to the rest of Ireland. In doing so, the magazine helped to promote a sense of regional identity in Ulster. *Uladh* also helped to instigate the twentieth-century debate on Northern Ireland's separate regional literary and cultural status.

¹ This version of the article has been slightly revised since its publication in 2004. It is based on 'Explaining *Uladh*: the promotion of nationalism and regionalism in Ulster' (unpublished MA thesis, Queen's University of Belfast, 1999), which I completed at the Institute of Irish Studies. I would like to thank Ms Ophelia Byrne and Mr John Fairleigh for their assistance with my thesis research, as well as Dr Michael Laffan, Dr Charles Ivar McGrath and participants in the UCD Open Postgraduate History Seminar, held on 21 Feb. 2002, for their comments on earlier drafts of this article.

The Dublin-based Irish Literary Revival sparked a similar cultural nationalist movement in the North. ‘Ardriugh’, the Antrim Road home of Protestant [p. 119] Belfast solicitor Francis Joseph Bigger, served as the headquarters for a group of people interested in the revival of Irish culture. Frequent visitors included poet Alice Milligan and future martyr to the republican cause Roger Casement.

Alice Milligan, a Tyrone-born Protestant, was the driving force of the revival in Ulster in the early years. Along with poet Ethna Carbery (the pseudonym of Anna Johnston), she started a publication entitled the *Shan Van Vocht* (meaning the Poor Old Woman) in 1896. The paper, which lasted three years, greatly influenced Milligan’s young neighbour Bulmer Hobson, who subscribed to it while he was a student at the Friends’ School in Lisburn. Although the subscription marked him out as an eccentric at this Quaker school, Hobson did not mind because the paper put him ‘for the first time in touch with the forces that were beginning to stir in Ireland’.²

Recognising the propagandist potential of drama, Hobson and his friend David Parkhill organised the first production of the Ulster Branch of the Irish Literary Theatre, the forerunner of the ULT, in November 1902. Shortly afterwards, in early 1903, they established a propagandist organisation called the Protestant National Society, which provided a formal structure for their efforts to recruit young Ulster Protestants to the nationalist movement.³ Members of the Society participated in the next recorded production of the fledgling theatre company, which was probably held in March of 1904.⁴ Thus, although the Society ‘had a brief and unimportant life’, it attracted a group of young people who fostered the ULT, ‘a body which exercised some influence on the cultural development of the North of Ireland’.⁵

As Ireland’s first regional theatre company, the ULT was the most important theatre group of its day based outside Dublin.⁶ Among the first plays to be staged by the ULT, then calling itself the Ulster Branch of the Irish Literary Theatre, were W.B. Yeats’ *Cathleen Ni*

² Bulmer Hobson, *Ireland yesterday and tomorrow* (Tralee: Anvil, 1968), p. 2.

³ Sam Hanna Bell, in *The theatre in Ulster* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1972), asserts that the Protestant National Society organised the theatre company’s first production (pp 2-3). This Society, however, was actually established *after* the first production, as a response to an article by Seumas MacManus advocating the formation of a Young Protestant National Party, published in the *United Irishman* in Jan. 1903.

⁴ Bell, *Theatre*, p. 3.

⁵ Hobson, *Ireland*, p. 4.

⁶ Mark Phelan, ‘The rise and fall of the Ulster Literary Theatre’ (unpublished MPhil thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 1998), p. 54; Robert Hogan and James Kilroy, *The modern Irish drama*, vol. 2 (Dublin: Dolmen, 1976), p. 121. For a detailed examination of the ULT, see Eugene McNulty, *The Ulster Literary Theatre and the Northern revival* (Cork: Cork UP, 2008), which was published more recently than the present article on *Uladh*.

Houlihan and George Russell's *Deirdre*. In 1904, the Irish National Theatre Society complained that the Belfast-based company had no right to use its former name and demanded royalties for the use of its scripts.⁷ In response, the company changed its name to the Ulster Literary Theatre and began writing its own plays. In December 1904, in keeping with its new mandate, the ULT staged the work of two Ulster playwrights: *The Reformers* by Lewis Purcell (David Parkhill's pseudonym) and *Brian of Banba* by Hobson. In the previous month, the ULT had launched *Uladh* as a quarterly publication. [p. 120]

Hobson recalled that the magazine's 'working capital consisted of five pounds' subscribed by architect Parkhill, journalist James Winder Good, artist John Campbell, music critic W.B. Reynolds, and Hobson himself: 'We were the committee in charge with Reynolds as editor and Campbell as manager.'⁸ In announcing the advent of *Uladh*, however, the *United Irishman* listed both Reynolds and poet Joseph Campbell as editors.⁹ The magazine's title, 'Uladh', is the genitive case of 'Ulaidh', meaning Ulster in Irish. As its title suggests, *Uladh*'s focus was meant to be on the nine northern counties of Ireland, but its content betrayed a definite Belfast bias with occasional forays into counties Antrim and Donegal. The magazine featured a vibrant mix of essays, poetry, artwork, and drama, contributed by journalists, political activists, writers, artists, composers, and poets. It ran on the proverbial shoestring; contributors were not paid,¹⁰ and only a few hundred copies of each issue were published.¹¹ Each copy cost sixpence, but, as the first editorial pretentiously declared, 'we do not aim at being sixpence-worth; we aim at being priceless, for honesty and good purpose are priceless'.¹² Despite an increasingly positive response from critics, *Uladh* folded after a year. The reasons for the magazine's demise remain in question.

In keeping with its commitment to cultural nationalism, *Uladh* provided a forum for artists, composers and poets, as well as essayists. The magazine's illustrators included several members of the Ulster Arts Club, which began in November 1902, as part of 'the same cultural quickening' that inspired the ULT, and shared many of the same members.¹³

⁷ Phelan, 'Rise and fall', p. 4.

⁸ Qtd. in Margaret McHenry, 'The Ulster theatre in Ireland' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1931), p. 83.

⁹ *United Irishman*, 15 Oct. 1904, p. 5. There is some confusion about the editorship of *Uladh*, possibly due to the existence of an editorial council. See Hay, 'Explaining *Uladh*: The promotion of nationalism and regionalism in Ulster', pp 10-11.

¹⁰ Forrest Reid, *Private road* (London: Faber and Faber, 1940), p. 39.

¹¹ McHenry, 'Ulster theatre', p. 7.

¹² *Uladh* 1 (Nov. 1904), p. 2.

¹³ John Hewitt, *Art in Ulster: 1* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 1977), p. 68.

Illustrator and designer John Campbell, whose work displayed a distinctive Celtic style, contributed a number of images to *Uladh*. He continued to use his artistic talents to political ends by producing a postcard for the nationalist Dungannon Clubs, which Hobson co-founded in March 1905, and contributing artwork to Hobson's separatist newspaper the *Republic*, which ran from December 1906 to May 1907.¹⁴

Three of the eight Morrow brothers, the sons of Protestant Belfast painter and decorator George Morrow, contributed artwork to *Uladh*, while another brother, Harry, contributed an essay. The clubs, to which they belonged, and the publications, to which they submitted work, reflect their nationalist sympathies. Cartoonists and illustrators Edwin, George (the future art editor of *Punch*), and Norman Morrow belonged to a literary club in London, which also included *Daily News* reporter Robert Lynd among its membership. Edwin and Norman also joined a London Dungannon Club founded by composer Herbert Hughes. [p. 121] Like Campbell, the brothers used their artwork for political purposes. Edwin, George, and Norman illustrated Dungannon Club postcards while George, Norman, and another brother, Jack, contributed cartoons to the *Republic*.¹⁵ *Uladh*'s artwork garnered critical praise throughout the magazine's existence.¹⁶

Uladh featured a number of contributions from composers, including Herbert Hughes, who achieved fame through his arrangements of traditional Irish folk songs, Carl Hardebeck, who later became professor of Music at University College Cork,¹⁷ and Reynolds, who was known for his musical compositions. Their essays examined Irish music within the wider context of European classical and folk music.

Uladh attracted poetry from several well-known poets of the day, such as Joseph Campbell, Alice Milligan (one of only two women who wrote for *Uladh*), Æ, and Padraic Colum, as well as individuals who were better known for other activities, such as Hobson and Good. The poetry tends to derive from Celtic mythology, as in Hobson's poem 'The Deluge', which featured Manannan Mac Lir,¹⁸ or follow what Terence Brown has called 'the rural, pastoral mode of poetry which the Irish national movement and its related literary revival

¹⁴ Theo Snoddy, *Dictionary of Irish artists: 20th century* (Dublin: Wolfhound, 1996), p. 50.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 330-3.

¹⁶ F.M. Atkinson, 'A literary causerie', *Dana* 8 (Dec. 1904), p. 253; 'Uladh New Belfast Magazine', *Irish News*, 7 Nov. 1904, p. 4.

¹⁷ McHenry, 'Ulster theatre', p. 8.

¹⁸ *Uladh* 1, p. 13.

confirmed as Irish aesthetic orthodoxy'.¹⁹ For instance, in a poem entitled 'At the End', Good recalled 'the blue of all the summers, the green of all the springs / And the white apple orchards where, thro' the silver rain / How sweet the blackbird sings!'²⁰ The magazine's poetry is indicative of its time and has not aged well.

Overall, however, the magazine's cast of contributors, who also included Bigger, Casement, and Gaelic League activist P.T. McGinley, was impressive. As such, *Uladh* represented one of the few times in Ulster history that a movement 'attracted such a galaxy of talent and in which men and women of such diverse creeds and political views were united in a common purpose'.²¹

Politically, the people who established the ULT and *Uladh* were an anomaly in Belfast, which the industrial revolution had turned into a 'sprawling manufacturing centre' with a large Protestant middle class who looked to England for cultural, political, and economic sustenance.²² The 'well-meaning band of young idealists' who produced *Uladh* naively believed that the problem of sectarianism in Ulster could be conquered by 'reason and enlightened humanism'. They originated 'mostly in a Presbyterian dissenting background, with a strong political allegiance stretching back to the ideals of the United Irishmen'.²³ A few Anglicans, Methodists, and Catholics also participated in these two ventures.²⁴ [p. 122] As Stephen Gwynn, a contemporary writer and future Irish Parliamentary Party MP, pointed out, this band of idealists 'illustrated the truth that Belfast is not all of one orange colour'.²⁵

Although some members of this group supported a cultural nationalism that promoted Irish language, literature, music, and sport as an end in itself, others saw cultural nationalism as a step toward the ultimate political goal of an independent Irish state. All of those involved with *Uladh* would have agreed with the sentiments expressed in late 1905, when Hobson's republican friend Patrick McCartan informed Joe McGarrity, a Clan na Gael organiser in America, that *Uladh*'s 'present circulation is confined to wealthy protestants', and that the

¹⁹ Terence Brown, *Northern voices: poets from Ulster* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975), p. 2.

²⁰ *Uladh* 1, p. 18.

²¹ David Kennedy, 'The drama in Ulster', in Sam Hanna Bell (ed.), *The arts in Ulster* (London: George G. Harrap, 1951), p. 57.

²² Peter K. McIvor, 'Regionalism in Ulster: an historical perspective', *Irish University Review* 13.2 (Autumn 1983), p. 184.

²³ Hagal Mengel, 'A lost heritage', *Theatre Ireland* 1 (Sept.-Dec. 1982), p. 19.

²⁴ Dorothy Macardle, 'The Ulster Players', *Irish Press*, 10 Dec. 1931, p. 6.

²⁵ Stephen Gwynn, *Irish literature and drama in the English language* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1936), p. 205.

object of Hobson's colleagues 'will be to bring them along gradually to nationalism'.²⁶ Some, however, saw this nationalism as merely cultural, while others, such as Hobson and Joseph Campbell, saw it as political.

As their families and employers did not always agree with their political views, some members of this group submitted their work under pseudonyms. 'They had been gaily treading the path to perdition for several years before even their parents knew who [they] were,' noted Dorothy Macardle in the *Irish Press*.²⁷ The situation was best exemplified in the pages of *Uladh* itself by Lynd. Using Riobárd Ua Fhloinn, a Gaelicised form of his name as a pseudonym, he stated in an essay entitled 'Ancestor-Worship in Ulster' that 'the unpardonable sin in the eyes of an Ulster father is that his son should hold a different opinion from his own', adding that this sin could affect one's employment prospects.²⁸ In light of this situation, it is not surprising that *Northern Whig* reporter James Winder Good wrote for *Uladh* under the initials J.W. to conceal his identity from his loyalist employer.

The editorial in the first issue of *Uladh* stressed that the magazine would be non-sectarian and non-political, and described its contributors as 'mostly young men, of all sects and all grades of political opinion'.²⁹ The magazine's focus was on cultural rather than political nationalism, despite the fact that many of its contributors were, as playwright Rutherford Mayne put it, 'flaming nationalist[s]' who advocated an independent Ireland.³⁰ The editorial also noted that the magazine would be 'run on broad propagandist lines', in order to tap into 'a strong undercurrent of culture in the North'. It concluded: 'if it is in our power to awaken the heroes to activity and the people to sympathy and life, surely our existence will be justified'.³¹

For novelist Forrest Reid, the pages of *Uladh* reflected 'the bravery of revolt – revolt against the tyranny of commercial materialism which weighed upon [p. 123] our native city and in the shadow of which we have all been brought up'.³² Reynolds approached Reid about

²⁶ Patrick McCartan to Joseph McGarrity, 23 Dec. 1905, National Library of Ireland (NLI), Joseph McGarrity Papers, MS 17,457(2).

²⁷ Macardle, 'Ulster players', p. 6.

²⁸ *Uladh* 3 (May 1905), pp 10-11.

²⁹ *Uladh* 1, p. 3.

³⁰ Qtd. in Sr Assumpta Saunders and A.A. Kelly, *Joseph Campbell: poet and nationalist* (Dublin: Wolfhound, 1988), p. 30.

³¹ *Uladh* 1, p. 3.

³² Forrest Reid, 'Eighteen years work: the Ulster Players', *The Times*, Northern Ireland Supplement, 5 Dec. 1922, p. xviii.

contributing to *Uladh* in December 1904, showering him with the first issue of the magazine, a list of eminent upcoming contributors, and a crash course on the ‘Ulster Renaissance’. Despite Reynolds’ enthusiasm, Reid remained unconvinced. Writing in 1940, he explained: ‘Although Irish, I had never been interested in politics ... had never distinguished in my mind between north from south, and the Ulster propaganda did not particularly appeal to me.’³³ Reid went on to point out that this ‘Ulster propaganda’, in contrast to the Northern Irish regionalism of the 1940s, was nationalist and ‘merely insisted that Ulster should play its part in the Irish Revival’.³⁴

The Ulster propaganda of *Uladh* differed from that of Northern Irish regionalism, best exemplified by the writings of poet John Hewitt, in that it embraced Ulster regionalism *and* Irish nationalism. *Uladh*’s propaganda ‘sought not so much to assert the independence of Ulster, as to define its distinctive character within “the generous circle of nationality”.’³⁵ *Uladh* explored the ‘relationship of center to periphery’ and aimed ‘to foster a specifically Ultonian artistic spirit’.³⁶ The magazine’s Ulster focus was initially problematic for southern critics. They feared that the magazine was encouraging the development of ‘a separate culture from the rest of Ireland’.³⁷ *Uladh*’s emphasis on an Ulster identity, however, was not endorsing some sort of cultural separatism but proposing that ‘a nation is made up not only of similarities but also of regional differences’.³⁸

At the same time, *Uladh*’s creators realized that it was more difficult for the literary revival to take root in Ulster because of the predominance in the region of Protestantism, unionism, and rampant industrialism.³⁹ They recognized that Ulster’s differences would require a separate brand of propaganda in order to raise interest in cultural nationalism. *Uladh*’s Ulster focus, coupled with its critical coverage of a wide variety of cultural activities, provided this separate brand of propaganda.

Each issue of *Uladh* was named after the traditional Celtic festival celebrated in the season in which the magazine appeared. Thus, the first issue, which came out in November

³³ Reid, *Private road*, p. 35.

³⁴ Ibid. See Chapter Six of Gillian McIntosh, *The force of culture* (Cork: Cork UP, 1999) for a discussion of cultural regionalism in Northern Ireland.

³⁵ Phelan, ‘Rise and fall’, p. 45.

³⁶ Laura Elizabeth Lyons, ‘Writing in trouble: Protest, literature and the cultural politics of Irish nationalism’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1993), p. 40.

³⁷ Atkinson, *Dana* 8, p. 253.

³⁸ Lyons, ‘Writing in trouble’, p. 37.

³⁹ Mclvor, ‘Regionalism in Ulster’, p. 184.

1904, was known as the Samhain number. Its editorial announced that ‘this Ulster has its own way of things ... still keeping on Irish lands’, and that the Ulster way was what the new magazine wanted to discuss, influence, direct, and inform.⁴⁰ It predicted that *Uladh* would offer its readers a [p. 124] far wider range of cultural topics than just theatre: ‘as the Theatre is the most essential of all art activities, and the surest test of a people’s emotional and intellectual vitality, *Uladh* starts out as an organ of the Theatre, the Ulster Literary Theatre, but proposed to be as irrelevant to that movement and its topics as is deemed necessary’.⁴¹ In an effort to reawaken and foster Irish culture in the North, the magazine was to cover everything from Irish mythology to middle-class architecture. This variety sets the Ulster magazine apart from Yeats’ contemporary theatre publications, which tended to concentrate on ‘literary and aesthetical problems’ associated with drama,⁴² and thereby challenges Ernest A. Boyd’s assertion that *Uladh* merely ‘served ... the same purpose as *Beltaine* and *Samhain*’.⁴³

In a review of the first issue of *Uladh* in the December 1904 issue of *Dana*, a short-lived monthly magazine, literary critic F.M. Atkinson pronounced the venture ‘very interesting and highly suggestive’. He had reservations, however, about the magazine’s Ulster focus. ‘It is sad to find it positively declaring that Ulster means to foster a separate culture from the rest of Ireland,’ he wrote, noting that the island had always been cursed by ‘its divisions and factions’.⁴⁴ Atkinson appears to have missed the point that the magazine would look at the Ulster way, while ‘still keeping on Irish lands’.

Critics with the Belfast-based *Irish News* and Dublin-based *An Claidheamh Soluis* had a better grip on what *Uladh* was trying to achieve. The *Irish News* critic asserted: ‘*Uladh* merits the hearty support of all who profess to have an interest in the intellectual life of Ireland’, adding that the magazine had ‘a special claim upon the North’. This critic recognised that the magazine would examine Ulster within a broader Irish framework and saw the debate over *Uladh*’s regionalism as ‘a moot question’.⁴⁵ Similarly, the review published in *An Claidheamh Soluis* hailed the first issue of *Uladh* as ‘a new and beautiful periodical’

⁴⁰ *Uladh* 1, p. 1.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Hagal Mengel, *Sam Thompson and modern drama in Ulster* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1986), p. 23.

⁴³ Ernest A. Boyd, *Ireland’s literary renaissance* (Dublin: Maunsell, 1916), p. 364; *Contemporary drama of Ireland* (Dublin: Talbot, 1918), p. 72.

⁴⁴ Atkinson, *Dana* 8, pp 252-3.

⁴⁵ *Irish News*, 7 Nov. 1904, p. 4.

illustrating ‘that in the so-called “Black North” there are young Irish intellectuals in close communion with Ireland, thinking and writing and singing of and for Ireland’.⁴⁶

The Ulster branch of the literary revival differed from the Dublin movement in that it looked to the region’s own history, not just ‘the peasant culture of the West’, in order to uncover its cultural roots.⁴⁷ Thus, throughout *Uladh*’s history its contributors seem to have been engaged in a search ‘for the identity of the province on the basis of a common notion of its social history and traditions’.⁴⁸ A number of contributions to the first issue illustrate this. For instance, an essay on ‘The Spinning Wheels of Ulster’ by engineer and spinning wheel collector John Horner offered readers a lesson in the social [p. 125] history of the linen industry. An *aisling*-inspired essay entitled ‘The Sleepers of Aileach’ by Joseph Campbell was rooted in mythological tradition. It urged Caitlín Ní hUallacháin, a symbol of Ireland used by Yeats in his play of the same (anglicised) name, to rouse the sleeping heroes of ancient Ulster.⁴⁹ The essay, which the *Irish News* called ‘a propagandist parable’, parallels *Uladh*’s own goal to rouse Ulster into action for the cause of Irish cultural nationalism.⁵⁰ With an essay on ‘Art and Culture in Old Belfast’, Bigger tapped into a contemporary view that the introduction of industry into Belfast ‘was associated ... not only with the loss of a more gracious way of life, but also with the loss of cultural identity and, by extension, with the loss of nationality itself’.⁵¹ Bigger compared Belfast’s current state of artistic and cultural decay with its vibrant state prior to the Industrial Revolution. He expressed hope that Belfast could regain its position as the ‘Northern Athens’: ‘We see glimmerings of salvation in the present Gaelic revival and in the art and technical instruction at present being imparted in the city.’⁵²

In the pages of *Uladh*, Ulster unionists were regularly criticised for allowing their political views to cloud their cultural vision. For instance, ‘Literature and Politics’, an essay in the first issue that was recently identified as the work of Belfast-bred Seamus Connolly, the secretary of the Dublin-based Theatre of Ireland,⁵³ lamented Ulster unionists’ lack of interest in native Irish literature: ‘Their unionism was a narrow and barren creed, which

⁴⁶ *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 26 Nov. 1904, p. 8.

⁴⁷ Mclvor, ‘Regionalism in Ulster’, p. 184.

⁴⁸ Mengel, *Ulster drama*, p. 24.

⁴⁹ *Uladh* 1, p. 6.

⁵⁰ *Irish News*, 7 Nov. 1904, p. 4.

⁵¹ Mclvor, ‘Regionalism in Ulster’, p. 185.

⁵² *Uladh* 1, p. 12.

⁵³ Phelan, ‘Rise and fall’, p. 2.

would exclude all native beauty in art and literature, because it was native.’ This attitude, he conceded, was due to ‘a current of nationalism ... in the literary output of Ireland of today’. He suggested that things were beginning to change, noting that ‘without fear of compromising their political opinions, nationalist and unionist are preparing to co-operate in many things, and not least in literature, for the honour of Éire’. In conclusion, Connolly urged unionists and nationalists to work together ‘in earnestness and fervour’ to promote cultural nationalism.⁵⁴

The second issue of *Uladh*, which appeared in February 1905, had more of an all-Irish feel with the inclusion of poetry by Padraic Colum and an essay by Stephen Gwynn. In ‘The Northern Gael’, Gwynn criticised economic boomtown Belfast for thinking itself in advance of Dublin, which he suggested was politically and culturally superior. Belfast had recently (and transiently) overtaken Dublin to become the largest city in Ireland. Despite this, Gwynn described Belfast as ‘a provincial town of little interest, except for those who desire to study almost extinct types of religious bigotry’. He encouraged the so-called Northern Gael, a traditional leader in Ireland, to overcome bigotry in order to accept, rather than reject, his Irishness, and to join in the Irish cause: ‘If Ulster, or even Belfast, is finally divorced in spirit from Ireland, it is a pity of pities; for Ireland, [p. 126] wanting the hand of the North, will go maimed; but Belfast divorced from Ireland will be squalid, undignified, and contemptible.’⁵⁵

The third issue of *Uladh*, which appeared in May 1905, included an essay entitled ‘The Theatre and the People’ in which Good defended the new cultural movement, which had been criticised for attacking the qualities that contributed to the success of Ulster. He explained the movement was not attacking these qualities, which ‘are good in themselves’, but was attacking ‘that caricature of them that is so complacently accepted as the real thing in Ulster today’. Good urged the people of Ulster to value success in artistic endeavours, as well as success in industry: ‘Energy, tenacity, and thrift are considerable qualities in the making of a people. But when thrift verges on meanness, when tenacity becomes obstinacy, and energy finds its only outlet in a frantic struggle for wealth, it is time for those who care for life and the beauty and graciousness of life to protest’ (pp 13-14). Good asserted that the ULT was staging this protest.

⁵⁴ *Uladh* 1, pp 17-18.

⁵⁵ *Uladh* 2 (Feb. 1905), pp 11-12.

Ulster's connection to Scotland was acknowledged in the first three issues of *Uladh*. Reynolds discussed the impact of Ulster's Scottish and English heritage on acting in a ULT review in the first issue, while in the second Bigger highlighted the popularity of Robert Burns' poetry among members of an eighteenth-century Templepatrick lending library. The third issue promoted the Scots connection through the publication of an Irish-language translation of a Joseph Campbell poem about the MacCruimins, the hereditary pipers to the MacLeods of Skye. An illustration of a bagpiper by John Campbell accompanied the poem. The magazine made no mention of the Ulster Scots dialect, though the language of *The Enthusiast*, a Lewis Purcell play published in the third issue, is rich with Ulster colloquialisms.

The fourth and final issue of *Uladh*, which appeared in September 1905, included a nostalgic prose poem about 1798 by Bigger that sought to assert 'a sense of continuity of nationalist culture' in Ulster,⁵⁶ as well as an essay by Lynd entitled 'A Plea for Extremists'. Lynd encouraged people to adopt a 'magnificent and broad-minded bigotry' against English culture, recommending that moderation be countered by an extreme passion for culture 'in a really Irish vein', even if it was only 'middling'. In his view, nationality should come before art in order to prepare 'the soil in which a great and distinct national literature may flourish many years hence'.⁵⁷

As can be seen from the preceding examples, certain themes typically ran through the pages of *Uladh*. These included: the celebration and criticism of things that made Ulster a unique part of Ireland; a nostalgia for Ulster's past; the value of cultural pursuits, especially those with an Irish accent; and the need for Protestants and Catholics, no matter their political hue, to come together. [p. 127]

The editorial in the final issue of *Uladh* gave no indication of its imminent demise: 'This number of *Uladh* ends our first year of publication. We can now stand on the four-cornered tower of our year's building and note the outlook, retrospective and future.'⁵⁸ Clearly, the editors expected the magazine to continue. A letter from Patrick McCartan to Joe McGarrity, dated 23 December 1905, indicates that there were plans to turn *Uladh* into a monthly publication.⁵⁹ On the same date, a poet signing herself Una (probably Alberta

⁵⁶ Mclvor, 'Regionalism in Ulster', p. 186.

⁵⁷ *Uladh* 4 (Sept. 1905), pp 14-16.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 1.

⁵⁹ McCartan to McGarrity, 23 Dec. 1905, NLI, McGarrity Papers, MS 17,457(2).

Victoria Montgomery) wrote to Milligan that *Uladh* had accepted her poem about the Strangford Lough for the first issue of 1906. Her next letter, of 11 January 1906, expressed surprise that this issue was not out yet.⁶⁰ It never appeared.

Margaret McHenry has noted that the magazine ‘died an early death due to lack of financial sustenance’;⁶¹ Laura Elizabeth Lyons has concurred.⁶² Neither researcher, however, cited the source of this information. The absence of advertising in the final issue supports their view.

In his autobiography, Reid painted a slightly different picture of the magazine’s demise. In late 1905 Reid was invited to edit *Uladh*, but ‘was too busy to undertake the proposed task, and *Uladh* expired, having run as long a course as such ventures usually do’. He later suspected that the magazine ‘perished largely for lack of copy’ because most of its contributors, including Reynolds, Good, Parkhill and Joseph Campbell, were busy writing plays. As Reid himself surmised, ‘A magazine cannot be run on plays alone, and I don’t think anybody except me was interested in other literary forms.’⁶³ By late 1905 Hobson was probably too busy with Dungannon Club activities to provide regular copy or editorial leadership. The fact that the shortest issue of *Uladh*, which contained only 27 pages of material, was to be its final issue may support Reid’s view.

A revival of *Uladh* was contemplated in 1907. This was first announced in the *Republic*, Hobson’s weekly newspaper, on 14 February 1907 (p. 3). Correspondence from Casement to Hobson suggests that an attempt to revive the magazine was made in the autumn of 1907.⁶⁴ In early August, Casement even submitted an essay to *Uladh* on the need for an Irish Olympic team.⁶⁵ A letter dated 24 October 1907 indicated that a new issue of *Uladh* was no longer in the works. Whether from lack of funds, lack of copy, or lack of an editor, *Uladh* was dead.

From the preceding analysis of *Uladh*, it can be seen that this short-lived but important magazine was the creation of a group of relatively young, idealistic, middle-class

⁶⁰ Una to Alice Milligan, 23 Dec. 1905, 11 Jan. 1906, NLI, Alice Milligan Papers, MS 5048. I concluded that Una must be the minor poet Alberta Victoria Montgomery, to whom Joseph Campbell dedicated his 1906 collection of poems *The Rushlight*, because she mentions the possibility of the dedication in her letter.

⁶¹ McHenry, ‘Ulster theatre’, p. 7.

⁶² Lyons, ‘Writing in trouble’, p. 50.

⁶³ Reid, *Private road*, pp 39-40.

⁶⁴ Casement to Hobson, 12 Aug. 1907, 2 Sept. 1907, 24 Oct. 1907, NLI, Bulmer Hobson Papers, MS 13,158.

⁶⁵ See Roger Casement, ‘Ireland at the Olympic Games or the Olympic Games of 1908’, draft essay submitted to *Uladh* via Hobson on 12 Aug. 1907, NLI, Hobson Papers, MS 13,159.

Ulstermen from mainly (but not exclusively) protestant backgrounds. Inspired by the ideals of Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen, the members of this group shared a commitment to the Irish cause that varied from [p. 128] support for cultural nationalism, to home rule, to outright independence. As Hobson optimistically noted, ‘Protestant Ireland is awakening to the fact that its grandfathers dreamed a dream, and its fathers tried to forget it – but the call of it is in their ears.’⁶⁶ This group, like the United Irishmen and the Young Irelanders before them, advocated a fusion of the Irish people – Catholic and Protestant, native and newcomer – into one nation. Unlike their forerunners, however, whose main concern was Irish identity, they addressed Ulster’s regional identity within the broader Irish context.

This group’s concern for cultural nationalism, coupled with the overtly nationalist politics of some of its members, marked them out as rebels in Ulster. Enthusiastic and articulate, they used *Uladh* as a vehicle for constructive criticism and cultural propaganda, encouraging the people of Ulster to set aside religious bigotry and to value both economic *and* cultural pursuits, in order to take their rightful place in an Ireland that embraced its regional differences.

By promoting this message in the form of an artistic quarterly, however, the magazine’s creators limited its appeal to a small middle-class elite.⁶⁷ In addition, the magazine’s inability to attract a wider Protestant audience may have been affected by the unfortunate timing of its publication during the devolution crisis of 1904-5. The nationalist bias of some of the publications that reviewed *Uladh*, such as the *Irish News* and the *United Irishman*, indicate that the magazine was preaching to the converted. *Uladh*’s small circulation and minority viewpoint ensured that it ultimately failed to change popular opinion in Ulster. Yet, in recognising Ulster’s unique heritage within a wider Irish nationality, the magazine did succeed in promoting a regional identity that sparked a debate on ‘the literary status of Ulster ... which continues to this day’.⁶⁸

Ironically, the Irish Literary Revival initially provoked a contemplation of Ulster’s distinct literary and cultural position.⁶⁹ The founders of the ULT and *Uladh* realised that it was more difficult for the literary revival to take root in Ulster because of the region’s

⁶⁶ Bulmer Hobson, ‘The new Ulster’, *Nationist*, 30 Nov. 1905, p. 169.

⁶⁷ David Kennedy, ‘Ulster unionism and the new nationalism’, in Kevin B. Nowlan (ed.), *The making of 1916* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1969), p. 75.

⁶⁸ Phelan, ‘Rise and fall’, p. 45.

⁶⁹ Mclvor, ‘Regionalism in Ulster’, p. 180.

Protestantism, unionism and industrialism.⁷⁰ In order to raise interest in the revival, they developed, through their dramatic and journalistic activities, a separate brand of propaganda that took Ulster's differences into consideration. Hobson, along with several *Uladh* contributors (most notably Good and Lynd), continued an overtly political form of this propaganda through the activities of the separatist Dungannon Clubs and the *Republic* newspaper.

Uladh was a key part of this reconsideration of Ulster's literary and cultural status. It 'helped to articulate a distinctively Ulster voice, which was dedicated [p. 129] to interpreting the North to the rest of Ireland, and to Ulster itself.'⁷¹ Both *Uladh* and the ULT raised awareness about those aspects of Ulster culture that differentiated it from the other Irish provinces.⁷² In praising Ireland for its regional diversity and criticising the cultural factors that prevented Ulster from supporting the Irish cultural nationalist movement, *Uladh* served as a vehicle to promote regionalism *and* nationalism.

Unfortunately, the ULT and *Uladh* 'have not always been recognized ... as the instigators of the debate on the North's regional literary status'.⁷³ For instance, editors of Ulster literary magazines that fostered the so-called regional revival of the 1940s and 1950s largely ignored its efforts. *Lagan* editor John Boyd wrote that his forum for Ulster writing, which ran from 1943 to 1947, was 'the first of its kind to appear in Ulster'.⁷⁴ Roy McFadden and Barbara Hunter, the editors of *Rann*, a quarterly magazine with a liberal and regional slant that appeared between 1948 and 1953, included *Uladh* in their list of Ulster publications.⁷⁵ They failed to mention, however, the magazine's significance in helping instigate the debate on Ulster's literary and cultural status.

In the first issue of *Threshold*, a publication of Belfast's Lyric Players, Mary O'Malley alluded to magazines like *Uladh* but did not mention any by name: 'Despite high literary standards and imaginative presentation of general topics few [Irish periodicals] have survived ... No one, however, would deny the value of their contribution to creative writing and objective criticism.'⁷⁶ *Uladh* contributed in both of these areas.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 184.

⁷¹ Phelan, 'Rise and fall', p. 49.

⁷² Lyons, 'Writing in trouble', p. 78.

⁷³ Phelan, 'Rise and fall', p. 55.

⁷⁴ John Boyd, 'Introduction', *Lagan* 1.1 (1943), p. 5.

⁷⁵ Barbara Hunter and Roy McFadden (eds), 'Ulster books and authors', *Rann* 20 (June 1953), p. 72.

⁷⁶ Mary O'Malley, 'Foreword', *Threshold* 1.1 (Feb. 1957), p. 5.

Although none of these three publications acknowledge *Uladh*, they all reflect its legacy. *Lagan* and *Rann* shared its sense of regional identity and combination of literary and critical content, while *Threshold* shared the latter element as well as its theatrical roots. The only real difference between these publications and *Uladh* is that they did not share its nationalism. *Uladh*'s overt cultural nationalism may be part of the reason why its contribution to regionalism in Ulster is not always acknowledged. Ironically, it was *Uladh*'s regionalism, not its nationalism, which initially disturbed the magazine's critics.

As noted at the outset, *Uladh* helped to instigate the debate on Ulster's literary and cultural status. This debate questions whether Ulster literature and culture are part of a broader British tradition, part of an Irish tradition, or, as Boyd and Hewitt asserted, a separate Ulster tradition.⁷⁷ More recently, literary critic Edna Longley has suggested that Ulster, or more precisely Northern Ireland, is a cultural corridor with one end open to Ireland and the other open to Britain.⁷⁸ [p. 130] For the creators of *Uladh*, Ulster's literature and culture represented a unique regional tradition within a broader Irish tradition.

As manifestations of the Ulster branch of the Irish Literary Revival, the ULT and *Uladh* were designed to promote Irish cultural nationalism in Ulster. In responding to the unique challenges of promoting nationalism in the North, both the theatre company and the magazine advanced a sense of regional identity in Ulster. As the ULT's work grew in commercial popularity, 'the original nationalist impulse grew weaker', and the company 'developed a rich vein of comedy which helped to sweeten relations between unionist and nationalist in a period of bitter political strife'.⁷⁹ Had *Uladh* survived beyond its first year of publication, it might have gone the same route and abandoned its cultural nationalism in favour of a stronger emphasis on regionalism.

A regional bias has been evident in Ulster's literary output, dating back at least to the plantations of the early seventeenth century.⁸⁰ The friction between a particularly large influx of Protestant newcomers and the Catholic native population contributed to Ulster's unique heritage within Ireland. The Irish Literary Revival sparked a reconsideration of this regional bias by the Ulster branch of the revival. As a manifestation of this revival, *Uladh* promoted a sense of regional identity by explaining Ulster to itself and to the rest of Ireland. In doing so,

⁷⁷ Mclvor, 'Regionalism in Ulster', p. 186.

⁷⁸ Qtd. in Maurina Crozier (ed.), *Cultural traditions in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1989), pp 35, 97.

⁷⁹ Kennedy, 'Ulster unionism', pp 74-5.

⁸⁰ Mclvor, 'Regionalism in Ulster', p. 180.

it fanned the flames of a debate on Ulster's literary and cultural status that still continues. [p. 131]