

Resolución Varonil or the manly resolve of Countess Mary Stuart O'Donnell

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Abstract. *RESOLUCION VARONIL O VIAGE Que hizo en trage de Varon la Condesa de Tirconel* by Alberto Enriquez, was published in Brussels in 1627. Written in Spanish, it gives an account of the adventures of Lady Mary Stuart (daughter of Rory Rory O'Donnell Earl of Tyrconnell, one of the most lamented earls who had left Ireland and gone into exile in 1607) and her dramatic flight, dressed as a man, from the court of Charles I, in London, in 1626. A close look at the account gives an insight into the world of patronage, preferment, suspicion and lobbying in which the immediate descendants of the Irish earls had to survive. In an era when women are rarely mentioned in contemporary historic accounts, except in relation to the importance of their father or husband, it is exceptional to have a first hand, amusing and quite unique account of the actions and feelings of this 'mujer varonil' who introduced herself in a peripheral, but fascinating way upon an otherwise all male stage. Finally, when considered in the context of contradictory contemporary witness reactions to this true story, we have to consider the possibility of quite a different rationale from that declared by Alberto Enriquez, for the publication of this very unusual account.

Key Words. Historic dramatic account, crossdressing, Irish noble woman, exile, Lady Mary Stuart.

Resumen. *RESOLUCION VARONIL O VIAGE Que hizo en trage de Varon la Condesa de Tirconel* de Alberto Enríquez se publicó en Bruselas en el año 1627. El libro está escrito en castellano y relata las aventuras de la dama Mary Stuart O'Donnell (hija de Rory O'Donnell, Conde de Tyrconnell, uno de los jefes mas recordados entre los que se exiliaron de Irlanda en 1607) y los detalles de su huida dramática de Londres y de la Corte de Carlos I, en 1626. Al estudiarlo con detalle, este relato nos ofrece una perspectiva del mundo receloso del patronazgo, del privilegio y el cabildeo en el que los familiares y descendientes de los Condes exiliados tuvieron que desenvolverse. En una época en que los relatos históricos serios apenas mencionan a las mujeres, a no ser en relación a la importancia del padre o el marido, destaca este relato directo y divertido de las acciones y sentimientos de una mujer varonil que se introdujo de una manera periférica pero deslumbrante en este escenario inhóspito. Finalmente, si se considera esta historia verdadera en el contexto de las declaraciones contemporáneas, a veces contradictorias, de testigos elevados, hay que admitir la posibilidad de otro motivo para la elaboración de este proyecto, bien diferente de la razón declarada tan cuidadosamente por Alberto Enríquez.

Palabras clave. Relato histórico dramático, travestismo, dama de la nobleza irlandesa, exilio, Lady Mary Stuart.

The year 1627 was a fateful one for the Irish community in exile in the Spanish Netherlands. As a consequence of the failure to make a marriage alliance between Spain and England,

the cooling of political atmosphere meant that "an outbreak of hostilities between the two countries seemed inevitable" (Ó Fiaich 1971: 78). From 1625 onwards, the idea of an invasion

of Ireland, backed by the Irish regiment stationed in the Spanish Netherlands, using Killybegs and the bay of Teelin as a source of entry, is carefully considered by the Infanta Clara Eugenia, Princess Regent in the Spanish Netherlands and the great Olivares or Conde de San Lúcar, chief advisor to King Phillip IV, with a little advice from the Archbishop of Tuam in exile, Florence Conry, as traced by Father Brendan Jennings in his perusal of the correspondence in the Archives Generales de Royaume, Brussels (Jennings 1964).

As preparations for an expedition gathered momentum, September 1627 was fixed as the date for its departure. The enmity between Seán Ó Néill, who had assumed the title of Earl of Tyrone after his father's death in Rome in 1616; and Aodh Ó Domhnaill, who was recognised by Spain as Earl of Tyrconnell¹ following his father's demise in Rome in 1608, made the choice of leader for the Irish brigade more difficult. Madrid favoured O'Donnell,² while Brussels favoured O'Neill as supreme Commander (Mac Craith 2002: 45).

The short work titled *RESOLUCION VARONIL O VIAGE Que hizo en trage de Varon la Condesa de Tirconel* (Manly resolve or journey made by the Countess of Tirconnel in male attire), written by Alberto Enriquez and published in March/April 1627, in Brussels, gives us a contemporary, if slightly biased, version:

Diulgose por Inglaterra un rumor que el Potentissimo Monarca de los Españoles, pretendiendo vengar la atreuida intencion de los Ingleses, preparaua una armada con intencion de embiarla a Irlanda, para que en ella con sus soldados mobiesse guerra el Conde de Tirconel hermano de Doña Maria Estuarda, contra la Corona de Inglaterra, cosa que el miedo sela hizo creyble y por consiguiente sospechosa à esta Dama, por ser hermana de quien pensauan tenia à su cargo semejáte empresa (14).

[A rumour spread throughout England to the effect that the Great and powerful Monarch of the Spanish People was preparing to send an armada to Ireland in order to avenge the insolent

attack carried out by the English. Once there, the Earl of Tirconnel, brother of lady Mary Stuart, would make war with his soldiers against the Crown of England. Their fears made this plan seem all the more credible and as a result of this, suspicion fell upon this lady as the sister of one who, to their mind, was to undertake and lead this enterprise.]³

It is against this very delicate political backdrop that, early in January 1627, the court of the Spanish Viceroy, the Infanta Clara Eugenia, was the scene of a 'cause celebre', when the young fugitive Mary Stuart, daughter of Ruaidhri O Domhnaill, Earl of Tirconnel, and his wife Bridget Fitzgerald, and younger sister of Aodh Ó Domhnaill, the young Earl of Tirconnel, arrived with quite a splash, having escaped from the court of Charles I in London. Her mother, Lady Bridget, daughter of the Earls of Kildare, had been close to the end of her pregnancy at the time of the flight of the Earls and, as a result, had been left behind. Subsequently, she was brought to London where her daughter, Mary was born. King James had befriended her and had become the child's godfather, giving her his own family name – Stuart. At her mother's request, Mary had been raised (a Catholic) in Ireland until she was almost 12 and, afterwards, was brought to the court at London. Now a young woman of some 19 years, she had decided to join her family in Europe. According to her own account, she had spent some six weeks on the run, accompanied by a kinsman and a handmaiden, before finally, after two failed attempts to reach Ireland, they managed to leave Bristol on a ship bound for La Rochelle. Afterwards, they had gone to Paris, en route to Brussels where she was received at Court with considerable acclaim for her courageous decision to leave England.

Enriquez's account, which gives a first hand account of this journey, was used and referred to by the Abbé Mac Geoghegan in volume 3 of his *Histoire d'Irlande*, published in Paris in 1758. It is the Abbé's version of events that features in all subsequent accounts. The entry

1. Tyrconnell is the modern anglicized version of Tír Chonaill, spelling variants include Tirconel, Tyrconel etc.

2. O'Donnell is the modern anglicized version of the family name, spelling variants include Odonel, O Donel etc.

3. All translations given from the original text of *Resolución Varonil* are taken from my own translated version into English which I hope to publish in the near future.

for Mary Stuart O'Donnell, in the DNB states that the Spanish original "is not in Trinity College, Dublin, nor the British Museum; the French translation only is in the museum" (Davis and Weaver 1927: 892). There are actually two copies of the original Spanish text in the British Museum, one in the National Museum in Paris and another in the national Museum in Madrid. It is a very rare little book, of some 137 pages of around under 100 words per page, written in Spanish and published, with three different printings, in Brussels in 1627. The author of the book Alberto Enríquez, claims in the Introduction to be Spanish, although born in the Spanish Netherlands. The translation into French was done by a French captain who took part on the Catholic side, in the siege of La Rochelle, subsequently became a priest of the Oratorian Order (Congregation de l'Oratoire) and devoted the rest of his life to writing books of a devotional nature. His introduction, which includes a very partisan, potted history of the Island of Saints and Scholars, stresses the fact that in the heroic sacrifices that the Lady Mary had made for her Faith, she becomes yet another example of the long tradition of fidelity to the Church, for which the Irish people are renowned (De Cadenet 1628: Introduction). Alberto Enríquez's account of her adventures on her often dangerous journey from London to Brussels, includes a letter of congratulation from the Pope Urban VIII and a letter of dedication to the Infanta Clara Eugenia, in which the author cites the Infanta's public approval of the young lady's actions – not only what she had done, but the manner in which she did it. According to the author, her actions had been exemplary. As sole heiress to the considerable estates of her grandmother, the Countess of Kildare, and the chosen future wife of a prominent Protestant nobleman, had she remained in London, she would have been assured of a future of ease. She had however taken this dangerous course of action, all because of her devotion to the Catholic faith. She was a shining example of the heroic spirit of her forefathers, the kings and princes of Ireland whose ancestry could be traced back to the earliest times and who had been, in recent times, stalwart defenders of the Catholic faith. Her noble lineage is stressed and her actions are seen as those befitting a princess. All of this must have served to enhance the cause of her brother, the Earl, with King Phillip in

Madrid and the obvious approval of the Infanta was crucial in his bid for supremacy as leader of an Irish force of invasion (Ó Fiaich 1971: 78). The fact that the account was written in Spanish, and was prefaced by a dedicatory introduction to the Infanta in the most laudatory tones, gives further support to this suggestion.

However, the introduction, written by her 'scribe', Alberto Enríquez, does make very clear that the young lady had many detractors who wished to give her actions a far different assessment. This fact is mentioned in the author's address to the Infanta when he explains that it is for this very reason that he wishes to write the true account: "Censura de tan divino ingenio me dio animo à querer hacer participante à todo el orbe" (vi). [It was the harsh judgement of such divine ingenuity that gave me the courage and the wish to share with the whole world this account].

There are other contemporary accounts that cast further doubt on the true nature of the adventure, and lead one to think that this account might be seen as an exercise in damage limitation for the O'Donnell clan, when, after the initial enthusiastic reception, the whole event became tinged with scandal. In a letter cited in the Wadding Papers from Fr. Roch de Cruce O.P. to Fr. Michael of the Holy Ghost O.P., direct reference is made to the arrival of O'Donnell's sister "que Tyrconel ha caydo mucho de su predicamento después que vino acá su hermana" [Tyrconel has lost much authority since the arrival of his sister (Jennings 1953: 211)]. Alberto Enríquez claims to have been moved to write about the manly courage of Mary, because of her decision to escape the Protestant court at London, and her professed wish, mentioned in the introduction, to join a community of nuns in Europe. He plays down the presence of her kinsman, while contemporary and subsequent accounts suggest that she had run away to marry the same, thus causing enough scandal to damage the pretensions of her ambitious brother. The most hostile contemporary account is, as one might expect, in the State papers for Ireland. Dated 1630 (three years after the actual event), Paulo Phillipi writes to Lord Viscount Dorchester, Chief Secretary of State that "The Lady Steward, daughter unto the Earl of Tyrconel, who fled... after being got with child by her servant, was betrothed and handfasted unto Tyrone's son there and

before his marriage is run away with her secret friend” (SPI Vol 251: Ref 63).

I suggest that the use of the word *varonil*, manly, by the author Alberto Enriquez, is a key to any reading or understanding of the account. It is a term that is frequently used in contemporary Spanish theatre, usually designating a strong female protagonist, who, rather than relying on her male companions, is forced to don male attire to sort out the many problems that beset her. It is used repeatedly by the author in his account: in the title, twice in the introduction and interestingly, twice again in his address to the Infanta – and in this case he attributes it to the Viceroy herself “*Varoniles empresas, à quien sino à tan Varonil Princesa, pueden dirigirse?*” (vi) [In matters of manly courage and valour, who better to address than such a courageous (manly) Princess?]

He is careful in his address to the Infanta to remind her:

Dio V.A. grato oydo, y aprobò con aplauso no solo à la piadosa determinacion con que dejò á Inglaterra, si no al modo con que dispuso su huyda, y mudò el trage, y las circunstancias, y particularidades, que en el viage la sobrevinieron (vi).

[You received her and gave her courage by graciously giving her audience and by approving and applauding not only the pious determination which led her to leave England, but also the way in which she arranged her flight and the details and circumstances which befell her on her journey when she changed her mode of dress.]

It is the question of her having dressed and behaved as a man that has clearly caused disquiet among the community that received her. However Enriquez once again anticipates when he writes:

pues a no auer mudado trage, para des lunbrar y alucinar à sus contrarios; fuera imposible auerse escondido à la solicitud con que la buscaron. Y ya que se vistio de varon y huuo de hacer, (en lo que era licito à la honestidad de una doncella) muestras de tal, no pudo euitar los casos que sobreuincieron en el viaje, ni huir los desafios, ni escusar algunas muestras amorosas que la acreditaron por muy hombre, y desmintieron à muchos que la trayan sobre ojo, y sospechauan era mujer (iii).

[Had she not changed her mode of dress to dazzle and deceive her enemies, she could not possibly have evaded them, given the zeal with which they searched for her. Since she was dressed as a man, she was obliged to act

accordingly (within, of course, the limits of a lady’s honesty and decorum). As a result, she could not avoid the various incidents that arose on her journey, nor escape from the various duels, nor avoid some amorous encounters which lent credence to her virility and gave the lie to the many suspicious eyes that were watching her, suspecting that she might be a woman.]

In addressing this issue straight away, in the clever way that he does, he attempts to get over this major obstacle to the credibility of his version of events. Allied to this repetition of the word *varonil*, we have a parallel repetition of the words ‘*prudencia*’ (prudence) and *clemencia* (clemency), when referring to the Infanta, both in the introduction and in the direct address to the Infanta. The discerning (discreto) reader is enjoined to read the account in a spirit of prudence and clemency.

Given such a careful introduction, it is interesting to see how, at different stages in the narration, this scrupulous ghost writer/scribe is at times totally overruled by the real narrator of the events in hand. Although he is at pains, at different stages in the narrative, to play down the potentially scandalous episodes, what does become clear is that he is writing down an account that could only come straight from the lady herself. The tone of the narrative is often at odds with the seriousness of the introduction and it could be said that it reflects Mary’s considerable spirit and mischievousness. Indeed, at times he seems at a loss as to how to explain away the different adventures, for example when she decides to go sightseeing in La Rochelle, he says dryly

pero tan poco quiso salir del, sin gozar de lo bueno que tiene (sies que ay algo bueno donde tan à tropelado esta el culto que se deue à Dios y la obediencia que tantas veces niegan à su Rey natural) (97).

[but she did not wish to leave it without having enjoyed whatever it had of interest to offer, (that is, if there can be anything of worth in a place where the devotion that is due to God is so disregarded and the obedience due to their natural King is so often denied)].

The frequent omission in Spanish of the subject pronouns *he* and *she*, lends added piquancy to the text, as Mary’s actions and words are at times, attributed to the persona of a young man (she calls herself *Ralph Huntley*) and at other times to the young lady herself. The text moves effortlessly from one to the

other and at times it seems that both reader and scribe are equally bedazzled by the unusual behaviour of the protagonist. At one point he calls her Ralph and self-consciously says “Rodolfo digo pues aun venia en habito de hombre” (110) [I say Ralph, because she was still wearing men’s dress].

However, at least some contemporary readers found the case made by Albert Enriquez convincing indeed, as did Pierre De Cadenet, who immediately undertook to translate the work into French. There is independent contemporary evidence to support the veracity of the outline of the story.

Francesco Di Bagno, then Papal Nuncio at Brussels, when writing to Cardinal Spada, gives a very colourful account of lady Mary’s arrival – he includes the detail, “une soeur du Comte de Tyrconnel, jeune fille de 17 ans, d’un physique très agréable, est arrivée à Bruxelles” [A sister of the Earl of Tyrconnel, a young lady of some 17 years and of very pleasing aspect has just arrived in Brussels]. He gives the outline of her story, cites her refusal to marry a heretic despite the menaces of the King of England, and he tells how the Infanta gives her “un accueil enthousiaste” [an enthusiastic welcome] (Bernard de Maester 1938: 825).

In Enriquez’s account, the details of her escape from the Court in London, with a maid servant and a young kinsman, are told with great spirit and wit. We get a first-hand account of what it was like to travel on horseback and stay at inns, meet with different groups, including Irish merchants for whom she has a great interest, while at all times keeping an eye out for spies and agents of the king. For various reasons, particularly the need for extreme secrecy, they are forced to go on the run for two months, during which time they make two thwarted attempts to embark for Ireland. Due to bad weather they are forced to change plans, lose most of their valuables when their Dutch vessel leaves port unexpectedly and eventually set off for Antwerp, only to be blown off course as far as Cadiz, in the south of Spain. They meet with pirates and eventually come to port at La Rochelle, which is still under siege. They make their way to Paris, are received at Court and finally arrive at Brussels on the 23rd of January.

The story that is told is extraordinary enough, but it is the wealth of detail, which amounts to a highly individual and colourful

account, which gives the book its unique value. In London she escapes from her household under the guise of going to Mass. She says

en aquella tierra esta tan perseguida y oprimida la profesion Catolica, a semejantes horas antes que amanezca se juntan à participar del sacrificio de la Misa ... y era cosa que solia hacer otras veces esta Dama (27).

[in those lands, the Catholic Church is so oppressed that people come together in the early hours before dawn to participate in the sacrifice of the Mass and the Divine Office ... so it was the practice of this Lady on other occasions]

During her stay in Bristol, she seeks out a priest for the purpose of confession and she tells of the elaborate secrecy and subterfuge required in order not to arouse suspicion, or disclose the hideout he is using.

The Ralph/Maria character is clearly the creation of a highly imaginative narrator, and the source of information could only be lady Mary herself. She portrays herself as one who has all the attributes one might expect from the daughter of a family that is depicted in the most heroic of terms. She is obviously proud of her cleverness and astuteness as a judge of human nature and she lets us know that she speaks Irish and French, as well as English, can sing, play the lute and make witty conversation. She not only dresses as a young man, she convinces all she meets that she really is, by her behaviour, by drinking, gambling, fighting duels, taking part (and causing) several fights and defending her honour as a young nobleman of the time might be expected to do. She is the one who always takes the initiative, outwitting her adversaries, to save both herself or anyone she chooses to champion. She woos and wins three different young ladies and seems to be almost predatory and certainly quite heartless about it all. Her excuse is that she must act as a young man would to allay suspicion. At times her conduct clearly mystifies her scribe and on occasions, he expresses his perplexity as to why she has taken certain decisions. Now that they are safely in France, they take a rest in Poitiers, where she makes another conquest:

y aqui por disimular mejor lo que era; y no dar ocasion de presumpcion alguna, se informò con mucha curiosidad y diligencio (sic) de las damas mas hermosas que auia en la Villa y estando un dia en la Yglesia oyendo misa...” (100).

[here again, in order the better to hide who she

was and allay all suspicion, she set out to discover who were the most beautiful women in the town showing the greatest of curiosity and diligence in the matter... One day when *she/he* was in church...’].

Maria continues to dress as a man until she arrives at the holy shrine at Hall, just outside Brussels, where she meets her brother.

The degree to which Alberto Enriquez has been diverted from his original purpose is evident at the end of the book, when he tells us that even though the book has already gone to print, someone has asked him to include an additional episode. It turns out to be an account of yet another duel, when she/he defends an Irishman who has been set upon by a group of Englishmen.

Which then is the real Mary? Is this just an exaggerated account by a young girl whose short life has been spent reading and acting out too many romantic plays (her original pretext for acquiring men’s clothing in London was that she was to take part in a play)? Perhaps so, but the few references to lady Mary that come down to us would suggest that whatever her scribe’s motive was in writing the account, the real personality of the protagonist made sure that her version would be told, with no thought as to the consequences.

There are several references to Lady Mary in the months and years following, and she appears three times in the Royal correspondence between the Infanta in Flanders, the Conde Duque de San Lucar, the great Olivares himself, secretary/ privado to King Philip IV and of course in the different memos sent to all three by the bishop of Tuam in exile, Florence Conry, as he attempted to further the course of an invasion and rebellion in Ireland (Jennings 1937: 218). Her arrival was noted and subsequently, it was suggested to the Infanta that she might try to arrange a marriage between lady Mary and Séan O’Neill, the purpose being to try to broker peace between these two rivals whose dislike for each other was well known. The Infanta reports back to the Conde Duque “the sister of Tyrconnell has declared that she has no wish whatever to marry Tyrone” (Jennings 1937: 217).

Although Sir Bernard Burke, author of *Vicissitudes of Families and other essays* (1861), in his chapter on “The O’Donnells in exile” had never seen or read the original *Resolución Varonil*, he had read Abbé

Macgeoghegan’s account and followed up with a search for documentation in Rome. In the papers of Father Luke Wadding, he found two letters which speak for themselves.

The first, dated 29th July 1631, is signed by Albert Hugh O’Donnell himself, and is to be found in the original Spanish version, in the published papers of Cardinal Wadding (Jennings 1953). I will quote the letter as he gave it, but will include the final sentence of the letter omitted by Burke, as well as the published version in Spanish:

Having heard that some woman in man’s clothes is travelling through your parts by the name of my sister, defaming me and my house, with inconsequent snares and inventions, I hold it well to supplicate your paternity, as my very particular friend and patron, to procure the arrest of that woman, not alone in consideration of my honour, but that of our nation, in order that her mysteries and snares be discovered. (*and punished as they deserve, in so doing I would be eternally obliged to you father, and may God keep you (as well) as I would wish.*)

[Haviendo entendido que alguna muger en hábito de hombres va por essas tierras en nombre de hermana mya, diffamando muy mi casa con no sé que embustes y invenciones hallé por bien de suplicar a vuestra paternidad como a tan particular amigo y patron assí myo como del bien y honra de su nación, que a todos nos la haga en procurar que aquella persona se encierre y esté presa en la forma que mexor le pareciere a vuestra paternidad, hasta descubrir sus embustes y castigallas según merecen, con lo qual me obligará infinitamente vuestra paternidad, a quien me guarde nuestro Señor como desseo” (Jennings 1953: 381-2)].

Happily, her brother’s negative influence did not extend to Madrid, for in Nov 6th of that year, Albert Baron O’ Malun, when making representations with regard to his own pension, cites the case of Lady Mary Stuart who had been granted a pension of 2,400 florins yearly. However, the second letter, cited by Sir B Burke, was written by Lady Mary herself to Cardinal Barberini, nephew of Pope Urban, and he found it among the Wadding papers in the Archive Chamber of St. Isidore’s in Rome. Dated 9th February, 1632 she writes:

having married Don John Edward O’Gallagher, a principal gentleman of Ireland my country, I am now.. for several months in Rome, the womb of Holy Church, with my said husband, a young lady that came with me from Flanders, and the nurse of the infant boy, to which, by God’s good

will, I gave birth in Genoa, in extreme want, and in such a state, that if it were not for Cardinal Ludovisi, the protector (of Ireland), and cardinal de Bagno, who are charitable to me as far as they can, I should perish with the others of hunger, cold and infinite other sufferings. The Cardinal protector excuses himself for that maintaining at his sole charge the Irish College, and never refusing and giving constant help to the others of our nation, besides his great allowances to every pious institution in Rome, he cannot duly provide for my wants; so that reduced to this most wretched state, and in two miserable little rooms provided for me by the almoner of the said Cardinal protector, enceinte for some months, burthened (sic) with the above family, I can have recourse to none that can more fruitfully help me. I cast myself at the feet of His Holiness and of your Eminence, imploring both the one and the other, by the bowels of the mercy of God our Lord, to deign to use your clemency and piety towards me, reduced as I am to this utter wretchedness, though of royal blood, as is known in the world, and educated like a daughter in the Royal Court of England. Signed Maria Stuart O'Donnell (Burke 1861: 142).

Similar correspondence addressed to 'Pope and Cardinal Protector of Ireland' is listed as circa 1631 (Jennings 1946: 137) and gives further testimony to the fact that Mary and her then husband had fallen on hard times.

In his article titled "Mary Stuart O'Donnell" (Donegal Annual 1987), Dr Jerrold Casway attempts to give a rationale for the ill starred years that followed lady Mary's triumphant arrival in Brussels. Because of her previous attachment to her 'kinsman' O'Gallagher, who had fled with her, she could no longer figure in the dynastic plans to unite the O' Neill and O' Donnell clans through a marriage of convenience, and she quickly felt the need to keep all avenues of help open. Her letter to Sir Edward Conway, Privy Council Secretary, written in March 1627, very soon after her arrival, attempts to excuse her flight from London and even suggests that she might be used to bring her brother the Earl back to the service of King Charles (Jennings 1946: 136-8). In her work entitled *Daughters of Banba*, published in Dublin in 1930, Mrs. Thomas Concannon ignores the many contemporary references to what actually happened and comes to the erroneous conclusion that Maria Stuart O'Donnell was "a secret service agent in English pay" (201).

In any case, nothing came of her suggestion,

but the tone of her letter, as well as its apparent contradiction and contrast with all of her previous actions, gives us a real sense of how powerless and bereft she felt herself to be. After her marriage to O'Gallagher, the couple spent some time in Rome and Genoa, moving later to Austria. Here, O'Gallagher enlisted as captain in the imperial army and was, unfortunately, killed soon afterwards. Mary Stuart remarried some years later and, to date, the last known reference to her is to be found in the Calendar of State Papers where there is a gossiping reference to her as having married "a poor Irish captain" and living once again in Rome (Casway 1987: 35).

Conclusion

After its early translation into French, this account has gone unnoticed by scholars of Irish history, perhaps because it was written in Spanish and was not, as far as I am aware, translated into either Irish or English. It casts a light into areas of the politics of the post flight era that would otherwise be left to our imagination to fill in – the world of patronage, preferment, suspicion and lobbying, in which the immediate descendants of the Irish earls had to survive. At this time Paris offered little solace, it was to the Spanish in Brussels and Madrid and the Pope in Rome that the Earl of Tyrconnel's daughter looked for help.

Most important of all, in an era when women are usually mentioned, if at all, in relation to the importance of their father or husband,⁴ it is quite exceptional to have a first hand account of the actions and feelings of one who introduced herself in a peripheral, but fascinating way upon an otherwise all male stage.

This account speaks not just about history and politics as she recounts it, but gives us direct access to feelings and reactions to the Flight and the difficulties for those who were left behind – initially her mother and subsequently herself – in her account of the background to her escape from London. Whether you would believe her version or not, we are the richer and better informed for having it.

We will leave the last word with Alberto Enríquez:

4. See Cunningham (2007) on the paucity of reference to women in early and contemporary Irish historical accounts.

Yo no te obligo ‘a nada, da fe’ (sic) a lo que quieres, en tu mano esta tener estas verdades por verdades, pero no dejar lo ellas de ser pues lo son tanto que te puedo asegurar an pasado por el riguroso Examen de personas doctas y curiosas, y estribá en la atestacion de una dama Principal y discreta, que movida con zelo Christiano, y aborreciendo, la conuersació de los hereges, dejò su casa, su hacienda y su relago, y aun su propio natural. (iii)

[It is not in my power to coerce you, you must believe what you wish. It is you who must judge whether or not these truths are indeed truths. Whatever your judgement, this account will remain a true one as verified under rigorous scrutiny by learned and enquiring persons. It is based on the testimony of a highborn and discreet lady, who was moved by Christian zeal and distain for the company of heretics to leave her home, her inheritance and even her very identity]

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