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# **Ireland and the Popish Plot**

**John Gibney**

**Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D**

**Supervisor: Prof. Aidan Clarke**

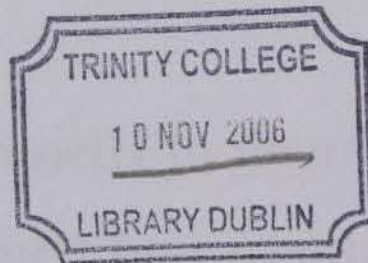
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Ireland and the Polish Plot

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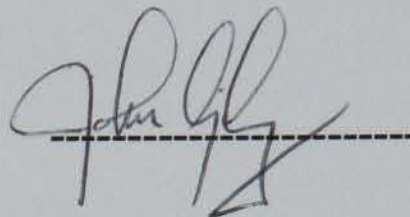
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John Gibney

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Gibney', is written over a horizontal dashed line.

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## Summary

This thesis is a study of the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis (c.1678-81) in relation to Ireland. However, the thematic concerns of the project are more wide ranging in chronological terms. Traditionally, the Popish Plot has been neglected by historians given the lack of major events in Ireland at the time, and such consequences that the crisis did have for Ireland are assumed to be merely offshoots of its impact upon England. The crisis occupies a prominent role in English historiography. However, in Irish terms the historiography relating to this period is notably sparse. The Popish Plot was the outburst of anti-Catholic hysteria in England prompted by claims made in September 1678 about the existence of a Catholic conspiracy in England intended to wipe out Protestantism there, in which Ireland was to play a significant part. This gave way to the Exclusion Crisis, an intense political struggle in England based on the divisive question of support for, or opposition to, a Catholic succession to the throne. In the absence of any substantial scholarly literature, the thesis is intended as an empirical study. It seeks to address the relationship of the Popish Plot to Ireland in two ways. Firstly, by examining the role that Ireland played within the Popish Plot as it unfolded in England; and secondly, by examining the impact of the Popish Plot on Ireland itself. In both instances, the 1641 rebellion in Ireland became a particular reference point for anti-Catholic polemic and attitudes in both islands. The Irish were one important element in what was perceived to be a transnational Catholic conspiracy, belief in which was the motor for much, if not all, of the popular paranoia that marked the plot and which was marked by an acute awareness of the religious composition of the neighbouring island. A key aspect of the thesis is in demonstrating how such allegations about the existence of an ongoing Catholic plot in Ireland, as evinced in both the allegations of informers and rumour, were themselves influenced by an evolving anti-Catholic tradition in Ireland, and themselves played a role in the subsequent evolution of this tradition.

However, important as they are, these are broader issues. The impact of the crisis on Ireland cannot be addressed in isolation from the preceding eighteen years; and an awareness and exposition of the continuities and unresolved questions of the Restoration period is an integral element of the thesis. It is a key contention of the

thesis that the Restoration settlement of the 1660s was far from secure in Ireland, thus contributing to further uncertainties at this critical juncture. The attempts to undermine the government of Ormond continued in a period of British unrest and uncertainty bordering on rebellion.

In sum, the project is primarily an attempt at a holistic cultural and political history of the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis in relation to Ireland, encompassing the aftermath of both and placing great emphasis on the nature of Irish and English anti-Popery in the later seventeenth century, within the wider context of the crisis across the Stuart kingdoms.

## Acknowledgements

Numerous debts of both an institutional and personal nature have been accumulated since I first began work on this thesis. The completion of the thesis would not have been possible without the support provided by a local authority grant from Dublin City Council, and both a postgraduate award and a Broad Curriculum studentship from Trinity College, Dublin. I also wish to acknowledge the financial assistance provided by the Northside Partnership, and by the Grace Lawless Lee fund, the Trinity Trust, and the T.W. Moody fund, all of Trinity College, Dublin. I would also like to record my thanks to the staff of the various archives and libraries in which this thesis was slowly shaped.

In personal terms, numerous people have helped me to complete this thesis over the past few years, in both major and minor ways. Such assistance has taken a variety of forms, direct, indirect, and in some cases quite possibly forgotten by those who provided it. To record the precise details of each debt would result in a list of inordinate length, so I will confine myself to a list of names, to each of whom I am grateful for something: Robert Armstrong, Ciaran Brady, Michael Brown, Coleman Dennehy, Sean Duffy, Aoife Duignan, David Edwards, Fiona Fitzsimons, Kevin Forkan, Ciara Hogan, Tara Keenan-Thomson, Breandán Mac Suibhne, Mairead McAuley, James McGuire, Jason McHugh, Edward Madigan, Dave Murphy, Jill Northridge, Éamonn Ó Ciardha, Kate O'Malley, Micheál Ó Siochrú, Jane Ohlmeyer, Helga Robinson-Hammerstein, Jennifer Scholtz, Freya Verstraten, and Darina Wade. I would like to thank my family, especially my parents, Charlie and Joan, for their encouragement, patience and support. And finally I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Aidan Clarke, for his advice, assistance and eagle eye throughout.

I could easily construct a rogues gallery of friends and colleagues outside academia who, in their own various ways, helped me to complete this thesis (or in some cases, inadvertantly did their utmost to prevent me from doing so). But they should know who they are.

J.G.

April 2006

## Abbreviations and conventions

Dates have been given according to the old style calendar, but the year is taken to begin on 1 January rather than 25 March. Quotations in the text have been modernised, with the exception of archaic words, and instances where spelling has dictated phonetic purpose. There have been occasional (and silent) minor grammatical alterations for the sake of clarity. Interpolations, and unclear or illegible words, have been indicated in square brackets. In the text itself, the names of individuals have been standardised wherever possible. Unless otherwise indicated, biographical details have been taken from the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (60 vols, Oxford, 2004) and the Royal Irish Academy's *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

**BL:** British Library.

**BL Add.:** British Library, Additional Manuscripts.

**Bodl.:** Bodleian Library, Oxford.

**Commons jn.:** *Journals of the House of Commons, 1547-* (London, 1742-).

**CSPD:** *Calendar of State Papers Domestic. Charles II* (28 vols, London, 1860-1947).

**CSPI:** R. P. Mahaffy (ed). *Calendar of the state papers relating to Ireland [in the reign of Charles II] preserved in the Public Record Office. 1660-(70), with addenda, 1625-70* (4 vols, London, 1905-10).

**CSPV:** Allen B. Hinds(ed), *Calendar of State papers and manuscripts relating to English affairs existing in the archives and collections of Venice* (38 vols, London, 1867-1947).

**Essex papers, i:** Osmond Airy (ed), *Essex papers, vol. 1: 1672-1679* (London, 1890).

*Essex papers, ii*: C.E. Pike (ed) *Selections from the correspondence of Arthur Capel, earl of Essex, 1675-1677* (London, 1913).

**Hanly, Plunkett letters**: John Hanly (ed), *The Letters of St. Oliver Plunkett, 1625-1681* (Dublin, 1979).

**HMC Rep.**: *Historical Manuscripts Commission, Reports 1-* (London, 1870-).

**HMC Egmont**: *Report on the manuscripts of the earl of Egmont* (2 vols, London, 1905-9).

**HMC Hastings**: *Report on the manuscripts of the late Reginald Rawdon Hastings* (4 vols, London, 1928-47).

**HMC Leyborne-Popham**: *Report on the manuscripts of F.W. Leyborne-Popham, esq.* (London, 1899).

**HMC Montagu**: *Report on the manuscripts of Lord Montagu* (London, 1900).

**HMC Ormonde, os**: *Calendar of the manuscripts of the marquess of Ormonde, old series* (2 vols, London, 1895-99).

**HMC Ormonde, ns**: *Calendar of the manuscripts of the marquess of Ormonde, new series* (8 vols, London, 1902-20).

**Lords jn.**: *The journals of the House of Lords, 1509-* (London, 1767-).

**NLI**: National Library of Ireland.

**Nunziatura di Fiandri**: Cathaldus Giblin (ed), 'Catalogue of material of Irish interest in the collection *Nunziatura di Fiandra*, Vatican archives', part 2, in *Collectanea Hibernica*, 3 (1960), pp 7-144; part 8, *Collectanea Hibernica*, 12 (1969), pp 62-101.

**Parliamentary debates:** A collection of the parliamentary debates in England (24 vols, Dublin, 1739-49).

**Parl. Hist.:** William Cobbett (ed), *Cobbett's parliamentary history of England* (36 vols, London, 1806-20).

**PRO:** National Archives of the United Kingdom (formerly Public Record Office).

**State trials:** William Cobbett (ed), *Cobbett's complete collection of state trials and proceedings for high treason, and other crimes and misdemeanours from the earliest period to the present time* (33 vols, London, 1809-28).

**Steele, Proclamations:** R. Steele, (ed), *A bibliography of royal proclamations of the Tudor and Stuart sovereigns, 1485-1714* (2 vols, Oxford, 1910).

**TCD:** Trinity College, Dublin.

**V & A:** Victoria & Albert Museum.

## Introduction

Historians often overlook the links between Ireland and the Popish Plot.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this is understandable, for on the face of it, little or nothing actually happened in Ireland at the time that could be deemed unusual. Indeed, the only Irish aspect of the Popish Plot to have garnered any significant scholarly attention is the execution of the Catholic primate and Archbishop of Armagh, Oliver Plunkett, at Tyburn in July 1681.<sup>2</sup> With this exception, little happened in England that might directly impinge upon Ireland. But many contemporaries, both in Britain and Ireland, fully expected that something would indeed happen, and that it would happen in Ireland.

In recent years, the historiography of early modern Ireland, and particularly that of the seventeenth century, has been revitalised. Yet while much of this new work has focused on the critical decade of the 1640s, the post-1660 period remains neglected. The reign of James II and the Williamite War (1685-91) have obviously attracted attention, but the Restoration and the reign of Charles II (1660-85) have not. This may reflect the relatively conservative nature of the Irish historical profession; the ostensible lack of major events in this period arguably renders it little more than an interlude between upheavals. However, instead of simply assuming that nothing of any great significance happened, it might be worth studying the range of possibilities that were believed by some to be on the verge of happening: different questions could yield different answers. The period of the Restoration, especially the 1660s, saw the creation

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Carte, *History of the life of James, first duke of Ormond* (2nd ed., 6 vols, Oxford 1851), iv, pp 542-638; Richard Bagwell, *Ireland under the Stuarts*, (3 vols, Dublin 1909-16), iii, pp 127-140; James Ernest Aydelotte, , 'The Duke of Ormond and the English Government of Ireland, 1677-85', (Ph.D, Iowa, 2 vols., 1975), i, pp 24-9; T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin and F.J. Byrne (eds.), *A New History of Ireland, vol. III: Early Modern Ireland, 1534-1691* (Oxford, 1976), pp 432-33; John Kenyon, *The Popish Plot* (London, 1972), pp 224-5, 233-4; J.C. Beckett, *The Cavalier Duke: A life of James Butler first duke of Ormond, 1610-88* (Belfast, 1990), pp 115-122; S.J. Connolly, *Religion Law and Power: the making of Protestant Ireland, 1660-1760* (Oxford, 1992), pp 24-32; Mark Knights, *Politics and Opinion in Crisis, 1678-81* (Cambridge, 1994), pp 265, 307; David Dickson, *New Foundations: Ireland 1660-1800*, (2nd ed., Dublin, 2000), pp 19-21; Anne Creighton, 'The Catholic Interest in Irish Politics in the Reign of Charles II' (PhD, QUB, 2000), pp 253-75. The most comprehensive study of the Popish Plot in relation to Ireland is Tim Harris, *Restoration: Charles II and His Kingdoms, 1660-1685* (London, 2005), pp 377-406.

<sup>2</sup> Tomás Ó Fiaich, 'The fall and return of John MacMoyer', *Seanchas Ard Mhacha*, 3 (1958), pp 51-86; John Brady, 'Why was Oliver Plunkett arrested?', *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 5<sup>th</sup> ser., 83 (1955), pp 41-7; idem, 'Oliver Plunkett and the Popish Plot', i-iii, *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 5<sup>th</sup> ser., 89 (1958), pp 1-13, 340-54; series v, 90 (1958), pp 12-27; Breifne Walker, 'Blessed Oliver Plunkett and the Popish Plot in Ireland', *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 5<sup>th</sup> ser., 109 (1968), pp 313-30; Tomás Ó Fiaich, *Oliver Plunkett: Ireland's new saint* (Dublin, 1975). John Hanly, 'Saint Oliver Plunkett' in A.J. Hughes & William Nolan (eds), *Armagh: History and Society* (Dublin, 2001), pp 413-55.

of a political and social settlement (based upon the maintenance of the massive land confiscations of the 1650s) that would underpin the social structure of Ireland until the end of the nineteenth century. Based as it was upon questions of religious and political loyalty (and self-interest) it highlighted the vexed sectarian politics of the time. The Restoration period can indeed be seen as an interlude between crises, but one in which the position and status of Irish Catholics vis-à-vis an effectively Protestant state remained an unresolved question.

This scholarly neglect of the period stands in stark contrast to the recently revitalised historiography of Restoration England, and to a lesser extent, Scotland, much of which can offer models to facilitate the study of Ireland at this time. This might suggest that concepts from British history should merely be borrowed and applied indiscriminately to Ireland. Perhaps this is inevitable, but there is an obvious danger here. Restoration Ireland was subject to its own dynamics that were undoubtedly affected by the relationship with Britain, but which remained distinct nonetheless. One could easily introduce the concept of 'British', or 'Three Kingdoms', history as an interpretive tool here, but this would merely be to state the obvious.<sup>3</sup> It is impossible to look at Irish history in this period without noting its multi-faceted relationship with Britain. That relationship affected Ireland far more profoundly, but the interplay between the two islands should not be obscured. For example, any credible allegation that the French intended to invade Ireland to support an imminent Catholic rising there, as a prelude to an invasion of England, would naturally be of concern to the inhabitants of both islands, albeit in different ways. This was indeed one of the key claims of Titus Oates in August 1678, which would precipitate and underpin the Popish Plot and subsequent Exclusion Crisis.

The Popish Plot was the outburst of anti-Catholic hysteria in England prompted by Oates's claims that there was a Catholic conspiracy in, and directed at, the Stuart kingdoms, intended to wipe out Protestantism there. This gave way to the so-called 'Exclusion Crisis', the intense political struggle that arose in England between 1679 and 1681 over the vexing question of who would succeed Charles II as king. As matters stood in 1678 the heir was a Catholic: Charles's younger brother James, duke of York,

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<sup>3</sup> Useful overviews of these debates are Jane Ohlmeyer, 'Seventeenth-Century Ireland and the New British and Atlantic Histories', *American Historical Review*, 104 (1999), pp 446-462; T.C. Barnard, 'British History and Irish History' in *The New British History: Founding a Modern State, 1603-1715*, Glenn Burgess (ed.) (London, 1999) pp 201-37. For the Restoration period itself, see Clare Jackson, 'Restoration to Revolution, 1660-90' in Burgess (ed.), *New British History*, pp 92-114.



who had already been tainted by Oates's allegations. In an atmosphere of intense anti-Catholicism, this was bound to prove contentious, and over the next two years a campaign to exclude York from the succession to the throne would be conducted both inside and outside the English parliament. One element of this would be the promotion of ostensible Irish witnesses, who could apparently prove the existence of a plot for a rebellion by the Catholic Irish with the assistance of the French and the papacy, allegations that would, in time, result in the execution of Oliver Plunkett. It is perhaps misleading to draw distinctions, implicitly or explicitly, between the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis, for one had built upon the other. The exclusion campaign rested upon a fear of a Catholic monarch, which in turn derived from a fear of Catholics. To whip up fears of Irish Catholics in particular, as would be done, was simply an attempt to bolster an existing position; namely, the desire to end the possibility of a Catholic accession to the throne. English Protestant fears of Irish Catholics were merely one element of a broader fear of European Catholicism, but they remained distinct and significant fears nonetheless. To an English audience, fears of the Irish were intended by the nascent Whig opposition to facilitate the purpose of excluding York from the succession, or at least to assist in doing so. Yet while English historians have emphasised the issue of 'Exclusion' both inside and outside parliament, the Popish Plot itself remains somewhat neglected. But as the key plank for excluding York from the succession was anti-Popery, surely both are intertwined? For example, from one Irish perspective, the Glorious Revolution and the subsequent exclusion of Catholics from the succession to the throne was perceived as the successful resolution of the exclusion campaign that had begun nine years previously.<sup>4</sup>

In strictly Irish terms why is the period 1678-81 significant? Ireland's role and relevance in this crisis has traditionally been overlooked, though more recently Tim Harris and Grant Tapsell have noted this.<sup>5</sup> In Irish historiography it is still interpreted in terms set by Thomas Carte almost three hundred years ago: that it is of little significance because the viceroy James Butler, duke of Ormond, essentially kept Ireland under control and thus guaranteed its stability. This view was shared by Sir Robert Southwell, who wrote to his nephew in May 1682 that

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<sup>4</sup> NLI MS 476, 'A light to the blind', ff 274-87.

<sup>5</sup> Tim Harris, 'The British dimension, religion, and the shaping of political identities during the reign of Charles II' in Tony Claydon & Ian McBride (eds.) *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c. 1650-c.1850*, (Cambridge, 1998), pp 131-56; Grant Peter Tapsell, 'Politics and Political discourse in the British Monarchies, 1681-1685 (PhD, Cambridge, 2003), pp 318-87; Harris, *Restoration*, pp 171-74, 377-406.

You will find in Ireland a profound quiet, as it has lately been, when Scotland had instead actual rebellion and England been filled and disquieted about the plot. I cannot impute this under God to anything but the conduct of the duke of Ormond. For he, having by long experience, knowledge of the kingdom and all men in it, having a large fortune and consequently many dependents scattered into its several parts, and being also related in blood to great numbers of the Irish Papists, the discontented had either dreaded to begin, or he presently knew and suppressed whatever was contriving. Thus knowing what security the kingdom was in, he had the courage to undergo all those calumnies and accusations thrown upon him in the heat of the plot. Whereas if a stranger had there governed who must have been influenced by the general outcry, the Irish had certainly been driven into desperation.<sup>6</sup>

This is a perceptive assessment by a contemporary. Yet it is surely inadequate to let Southwell have the last word. The general neglect in the historiography of Restoration Ireland may partly be due to its lack of events to garner attention, as noted above. It should be remembered that Ireland at this time also had no parliament, and thereby lacked an institutional forum for the expression of political beliefs such as were articulated in Westminster at this time, though Ireland would attract the attention of the English parliament as the crisis wore on.

There is an obvious model to borrow from Jonathan Scott: the concept of a 'Restoration Crisis', which as an interpretive tool might be applicable to Ireland.<sup>7</sup> Importing concepts wholesale from other national histories presents pitfalls, for Irish history must be viewed on its own terms. But given the quiescent paradigm that is generally applied to the period 1678-81, points of comparison could be instructive. Scott does not provide an answer: only a model. The more intricate elements are naturally more specific to England, but the fundamental bedrock of his argument is readily applicable to Ireland: that 1678-81 witnessed a political crisis that was perceived to have the potential to replicate the events of the early 1640s, and that this was merely one in a sequence of interlinked crises throughout the seventeenth century. Indeed, Scott's 'Restoration Crisis' inevitably touches upon Ireland.<sup>8</sup> English perspectives on Ireland, at least as expressed in parliament during the Exclusion Crisis, were dictated by questions of security: the external security of England was deemed

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<sup>6</sup> Sir Robert Southwell to Sir John Perceval, 16 May 1682 (cited in Aydelotte, 'The Duke of Ormond and the English Government of Ireland', i, pp 28-9).

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the Restoration Crisis, 1677-1683* (Cambridge, 1991), pp 1-49; Jonathan Scott, *England's Troubles: Seventeenth-Century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Scott, 'England's Troubles: Exhuming the Popish Plot' in Tim Harris, Mark Goldie & Jonathan Scott (eds), *The politics of religion in Restoration England*, (Oxford, 1990), pp 122-3.

inextricable from the internal security of Ireland, and the speech made by Anthony Ashley Cooper, earl of Shaftesbury, before the English House of Lords in March 1679 on the subject of Ireland and Scotland would make that connection explicit.<sup>9</sup> Implicit within his assertions were English uncertainties about Ireland. War, conquest and colonisation in the 1640s and 1650s had radically altered Irish society in ways that persisted beyond the Restoration. What also persisted was a lingering uncertainty as to whether those changes would be permanent, or might yet be reversed.

In Irish terms the period 1678-81 *was* a crisis; given the overwhelmingly Catholic composition of the island, allegations of Catholic plotting were bound to have an impact, and a resonance. The crisis was deemed to have the potential to replicate the events of the early 1640s in Ireland, most particularly the 1641 rebellion and the atrocities committed against Protestants during it. Perhaps an adequate history of this crisis in Ireland would be a history of what did not actually happen: a history of fears and possibilities, and the potential impact as well as the actual. J.C. Beckett conceptualised Restoration Ireland as

A period of transition, in a more direct and genuine sense than that overworked phrase commonly implies. By the 1660s the basis of the 'Protestant Ascendancy' that was to dominate the eighteenth century had already been laid; but it was not until after the wars and of the Revolution that Irish Protestants acquired the arrogant self-confidence that became one of their main characteristics. In the interval, they still felt insecure; they still feared that the dispossessed Roman Catholics might strike a blow to recover their estates and their power; and they watched anxiously the course of events in England, lest some change of policy there should weaken or destroy their position.<sup>10</sup>

This thesis is about a part of that interval. The post-1660 period can be conceptualised as one of fundamental tension in Irish terms, based on the question of who were to be the masters of Ireland? The Restoration settlement was by no means definitive, and the period 1660-89 saw alternating efforts both to secure and overturn the anomalous land settlement that had largely maintained the Cromwellian confiscations of the 1650s. The possibility of the land settlement being overturned at the expense of the Protestant landed elite who had benefited the most from it resonated throughout the period. Would they retain the gains they had made in the 1650s? Or would they be supplanted by the disgruntled and dispossessed Catholic Irish elite who had come off the worst in

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<sup>9</sup> K.H.D. Haley, *The first earl of Shaftesbury* (Oxford, 1968), pp 510-11.

<sup>10</sup> J.C. Beckett, 'The Irish Armed Forces, 1660-1685' in John Bossy & Peter Jupp (eds), *Essays presented to Michael Roberts* (Belfast, 1976), p. 41.

the 1650s, and from whom Protestants were deemed to be in danger? It was obvious who had lost the battle, but who was to win the war? The position of the nascent Protestant ascendancy would only be fully secured in the long shadow of the Williamite victory of 1691. Yet prior to that there was considerable uncertainty and fear amongst Protestants in Ireland as to whether they would survive and prosper, or whether they would fall victim to another onslaught along the lines of what 1641 was believed to have been, fears that were highlighted during the crisis of the Popish Plot. There is a major contradiction, after all, between the perceived stability of Ireland in 1678-81 and the crippling warfare of 1689-91, for the prevailing fears of 1678-81 (French invasion and a Catholic assault on the Protestant interest) resemble the perceived and actual reality of events in 1689-91. Therein lies the relevance of the earlier crisis: the Popish Plot, perhaps because of Ireland's relative quiescence, offers a window into the ostensibly unruffled world of Restoration Ireland. According to one of the few substantive studies of the period, the neglect of the Popish Plot in Irish historiography is perfectly justifiable, for it would be 'repetitive and largely purposeless' to write 'an elaborate description of a phenomenon which was, in any event, far more influential and pervasive in England than in Ireland'.<sup>11</sup> But to write the history of the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis in relation to Ireland is to write the history of what did not happen, but of what was believed to be imminent. It is to write the history of fears and expectations that to contemporaries were distinct possibilities. The crisis of 1678-81 highlighted a variety of interlinked issues. The spectre of a Catholic threat to Protestants foreshadowed the Jacobite era, but more importantly it highlighted unresolved questions from the past. The eradication of the Commonwealth across three kingdoms in 1659-60 implicitly meant the eradication of all it had done; and in Ireland, this had major implications. Those Catholics who had been dispossessed under the Cromwellian regime in the 1650s saw an opportunity to recoup their losses; but as this would inevitably be at the expense of those Protestants who had gained their land, this was not going to be straightforward. The Restoration period in Ireland opened on the basis of a singular question that would remain unresolved for over three decades, and whose consequences would reverberate for over two centuries: who were to be the masters of Ireland? For Irish Protestants, the possibility that it might not be them guaranteed persistent concerns about the intentions of their Catholic neighbours.

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<sup>11</sup> Aydelotte, 'The Duke of Ormond and the English Government of Ireland', i, p. 25.

The thesis is divided into three sections. Section one details the specific role that Ireland came to play within the crisis as it unfolded in England, and to locate Ireland within the English anti-Catholic tradition. Section two seeks to outline the basis for Irish Protestant perceptions and fears of the Catholic Irish, along with structural issues within Irish society that influenced the reaction of the Irish government to the Popish Plot. Section three addresses the actual impact of the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis on Ireland. The concluding chapter seeks to integrate these elements, and to assess their subsequent implications with particular reference to the events of 1689-91.

## **Part 1:**

### **‘That kingdom cannot long continue in English hands’: Ireland in the Popish Plot**

## Chapter 1:

### September 1678-November 1680

The London cleric Israel Tonge first met Titus Oates in 1677. While Tonge's fanatical anti-Catholicism was unquestionable, in Oates he seemed to find confirmation to match his conviction. For Oates himself, a pivotal moment in a career riddled with dubious activities came after his expulsion from the Catholic seminary of St Omer in June 1678. Returning to London in July, he renewed his acquaintance with Tonge, and furnished him with an elaborate account of a Catholic conspiracy that both men subsequently recounted in an audience with Charles II on August 13. They were examined before the Privy Council on 28-9 September, and some credence was given to their claims, which were presented officially to the English House of Lords on October 31.<sup>12</sup> In doing so the allegations were brought out into the open, if not yet into the public domain, and within these claims about the existence of a wide ranging international conspiracy directed against Protestant England, it was evident that Ireland had a significant role to play.

Oates claimed to have witnessed a great deal in his travels on the continent, and Ireland played an alarmingly prominent part in his account. Amidst the welter of detail he provided, he claimed to have seen a letter dated 10 June 1677 that referred to an attempt 'to procure some Persons to dispatch the King', a letter that was supposedly shown to the Catholic archbishop of Tuam, James Lynch, in Madrid.<sup>13</sup> There were also plans afoot to facilitate 'the French king's landing in Ireland...the Irish Catholics were ready to rise, in order to which, there was forty thousand black bills provided, to furnish the Irish soldiers withal'.<sup>14</sup> Lynch was explicitly implicated in this.<sup>15</sup> Peter Talbot, the Catholic archbishop of Dublin, had supposedly written a sinister letter stating that 'the fathers of the society in Ireland were very vigilant to prepare the people to arrive, for the defence of their liberty and religion, and to recover their estates'.<sup>16</sup> Emissaries were sent to Ireland to lay the ground for a rebellion, and contributions of

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<sup>12</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, pp 313-30.

<sup>13</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p 313.

<sup>14</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p 314.

<sup>15</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p 315.

<sup>16</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p 315.

money for this purpose were supposedly collected in Berkshire, Essex, and Oxfordshire. By the following April the emissaries reported that the Irish were ready to rise at ten days notice with 20,000 foot and 5,000 horse to let in the French, and there were apparently further forces available in the north of the country. Ormond was supposedly 'in a great perplexity, to see Catholic religion thrive so well', and there were others who, at the behest of the Jesuits, 'resolve to cut the Protestants throats again, when once they rise'.<sup>17</sup> The Jesuits had supposedly employed Irishmen to start both the Great Fire of London of 1666 and the Southwark fire of 1676, which was supposedly started by John Groves and three Irishmen procured by 'Dr. Fogarty', and handsomely paid by the Jesuits.<sup>18</sup>

By August a consult in London identified the murder of Ormond as a key objective; four Irish Jesuits were to do this, and it would be the signal for the Irish to rise. Should they fail, Fogarty (who had also secured the services of four Irishmen to murder the King) would deal with Ormond.<sup>19</sup> Peter Talbot and his brother Richard, Ormond's own cousin Richard, Viscount Mountgarret, and the latter's son Edmund, along with various others, were all implicated, and a Papal legate was now supposedly in Ireland to assert papal jurisdiction. The Irish, having being granted clerical permission to swear the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, had infiltrated garrisons across the country. William Godolphin, the English envoy-extraordinary to Spain, who had previously been correctly suspected of being a Catholic (he had converted whilst in Spain), was supposedly in communication with the Jesuits and Lynch. And what was all of this activity intended to do? 'The design of the Jesuits; which was, to raise a rebellion in the three kingdoms, and to destroy the King'.<sup>20</sup> The implication that the Protestants in those kingdoms were also to be destroyed hardly needed to be reiterated.

What made Oates's account critical was that he had tailored it to suggest that he was possessed of inside knowledge, and it seemed to indicate that the ostensible plot was an imminent reality. 'Its lack of originality was no disadvantage, for it told of the sort of Popish design which the anti-Catholic tradition had made all too familiar to English Protestants'.<sup>21</sup> But it was crucial to the manner in which Oates had revealed this plot that he had apparently done so in the nick of time. From this point on, the

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<sup>17</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p 317.

<sup>18</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p 320.

<sup>19</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p 323.

<sup>20</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p 327.

<sup>21</sup> John Miller, *Popery and politics in England, 1660-1688* (Cambridge, 1973), p. 158.



crisis would unfold in Britain, and would inevitably involve Ireland. And any chance that a prospective lack of evidence would cause the fear of a plot to fade away ended in London on 17 of October, when the body of Sir Edmund Bury Godfrey was found in London, run through with his own sword.

‘Pray God it be not Sir Edmund Bury Godfrey’, exclaimed one of his discoverers.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately it was. The previous day, the concern of the English government was made manifest in the report delivered to Charles II on the content of the papers of York’s secretary Edward Coleman, which in itself would have given a further impetus to the investigation into the plot.<sup>23</sup> However, Godfrey’s body was (and would become) an altogether more public matter. He was the magistrate before whom Oates had sworn his original claims about the plot; arguably then, he was a man who knew too much, and the obvious conclusion to draw was that he met his death at Catholic hands. The political impact of Godfrey’s sinister demise ensured that the plot was here to stay, and if so it was bound to have repercussions throughout all three kingdoms.

It had been immediately evident that there was a twofold Irish dimension to what has been described as ‘a self-consciously British’ story.<sup>24</sup> Firstly, there would be the attempt by Irish assassins to kill the King. Secondly, there was to be a Franco-Irish rebellion that would involve the extermination of Protestants in both Ireland and Britain.

Allegations of this nature were nothing new: they had cropped up at intervals in both islands since at least the 1640s, and continued long after the Restoration.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, in 1671 the Venetian ambassador had reported to his superiors about ongoing English apprehensions of a French landing in Ireland.<sup>26</sup> And in 1673 the Venetian ambassador to France observed how any rebellion that broke out in Ireland on a religious pretext would provide Louis XIV with an excuse to despatch troops there.<sup>27</sup> In geographic and strategic terms, this was not implausible. And allegations of prospective Catholic rebellions or unrest in Ireland tended to be affected by wider developments on the

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<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Alan Marshall, *The Strange death of Edmund Godfrey*, p xi

<sup>23</sup> Kenyon, *Popish Plot*, p 86

<sup>24</sup> Harris, *Restoration*, p. 137.

<sup>25</sup> Toby Barnard, ‘Conclusion. Settling and unsettling Ireland: the Cromwellian and Williamite revolutions’ in Jane H. Ohlmeyer (ed), *Ireland from Independence to Occupation, 1641-1660* (Cambridge, 1995), pp 268, 277-83.

<sup>26</sup> *CSPV, 1671-72*, p. 24.

<sup>27</sup> *CSPV, 1673-75*, p. 87.

Continent, most especially the fluctuating fortunes of Catholic powers in Europe. It seems reasonable to suggest that Protestants in Ireland would pay attention to such matters: after all, they could easily find themselves on the front line of any Anglo-French conflict. For example, in March 1674 one John O'Daly in Cork claimed that 'the king of France and the subduing of the Hollanders' encouraged the lawlessness of the Irish. Popular hostility to Catholic France was evident on the part of both English and Irish Protestants. English rivalry with the Dutch was also obvious: a common adherence to Protestantism had not prevented the outbreak of the second Anglo-Dutch war, with England aligned with France. The treaty that ended the war had been signed on 9 February 1674, and arguably, could be seen as a capitulation by the (Protestant) Dutch implicitly conceding an advantage to the (Catholic) French. O'Daly also expressed a lurking sentiment that Charles II was not necessarily to be trusted in such circumstances.

For no doubt the King of England will condescend to anything that shall be by the King of France demanded. And the curse of God light upon those that were in power for to own him for their sovereign, and that did not rather cut off his head as his father was, knowing him always inclinable and favourable to the Irish, and the Lord knows if I had been in their power I would sooner drown myself than choose him King.<sup>28</sup>

The pro-French inclinations of Charles II were generally suspected, and such suspicions were entirely justified. Charles's alignment with Catholic France would become even more contentious and unpopular as the decade wore on, especially after the Anglo-Dutch war.<sup>29</sup> Ireland naturally played a role in English assessments of Catholic intentions in general, and French intentions in particular. In March 1677 it was expected that the English parliament would criticise the continued recruitment of levies for the French service in the three kingdoms, and as the most overwhelmingly Catholic of those kingdoms, it was observed that Ireland was both dangerous and vulnerable: its defences were dilapidated and inadequate, and the army there was 'unpaid, unarmed, and scarce a piece of cannon well mounted'.<sup>30</sup>

Fears of Catholic plotting were also prevalent within Ireland itself, and especially in Munster: they would find eloquent (if fulsome) expression in the person of

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<sup>28</sup> Deposition of John O'Daly, 27 Mar. 1674 (*HMC Egmont*, ii, pp 32-3).

<sup>29</sup> Steven C. A. Pincus, 'From butterboxes to wooden shoes: the shift in English popular sentiment from anti-Dutch to anti-French in the 1670s', *Historical Journal*, 38 (1995), pp 351-7.

<sup>30</sup> Newsletter, 27 Mar. 1677 (*HMC Egmont*, ii, pp 58-9).

Orrery during the Popish Plot.<sup>31</sup> As the most southerly region of Ireland, Munster was the most vulnerable to French attentions from the continent: one consequence of this was the construction, from March 1678, of the massive edifice of Charles Fort at Kinsale.<sup>32</sup> But concerns about attack from without were inevitably intertwined with concerns about the Catholic Irish from within. In January 1678 the Munster landowner and politician Sir Robert Southwell had observed that war with France seemed imminent, and 'it is manifest that our enemy will do his best to excite problems both in Scotland and Ireland...and in this latter especially where all places lie naked to his invasion...all who have their estates lying in that kingdom have reason to be alarmed.'<sup>33</sup> Within this assessment was an awareness of two key issues. Firstly, that such a turn of events could have serious implications, and could be influenced by disparate events across the three kingdoms. Secondly, that within Ireland itself there was the quite specific reality that the dispossessed Catholic majority on the island might be exploited by the French, or might use the opportunity provided by the French to retrieve their estates at the expense of those, such as Southwell, who did indeed possess land there. The available army in Ireland 'was intended to perform a double function: it was to act as a police force in time of peace and as a protection against invasion in time of war'.<sup>34</sup> But the precise definition of peace would remain a source of contention for some in Ireland.

Such fears were nothing new. However, the onset of the Popish Plot did force the English government to issue orders to its subordinate administration in Dublin to deal with Ireland's security. A peculiar combination of geography, an overwhelmingly Catholic population and a notably weak military ensured that Ireland could readily be perceived as the most vulnerable and potentially dangerous of the three kingdoms. From November 1678 onwards, arguably the most intense phase of the Popish Plot, the Privy Council began to initiate a crackdown on Catholics, both from sincere belief and the desire to be seen to doing something: Catholic clerics were to be banished, Catholics were to be disarmed, prosecutions for recusancy were to be stepped up, and the oath of allegiance was to be imposed more widely.<sup>35</sup> As the Privy Council would be preoccupied with dealing with the implications of the Popish Plot in England, it would

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<sup>31</sup> David Dickson, *Old World Colony: Cork and South Munster, 1630-1830* (Cork, 2005), p. 49.

<sup>32</sup> Paul M. Kerrigan, 'Charles Fort, Kinsale', *The Irish Sword*, 13 (1979), pp 323-9.

<sup>33</sup> Sir Robert Southwell to Sir Philip Perceval, 24 Jan. 1678 (*HMC Egmont*, ii, pp 69-70).

<sup>34</sup> Beckett, 'Irish Armed Forces', p. 45.

<sup>35</sup> Miller, *Popery and politics in England*, pp 162-9.

naturally devote time to the Irish component of that plot, insofar as it could be discerned. Many of the security measures taken in Ireland had mirrored those taken in England; indeed, many of the proclamations issued by the Irish administration during this period simply reiterated similar English proclamations. In November 1678 the English secretary of state, Joseph Williamson, congratulated the Mayor of Chester for his assiduousness in apprehending Irish officers who, having been dismissed from the royal service, were now returning to Ireland. Williamson instructed that lists be drawn up of any others who did likewise, regardless of whether they had been granted permission to do so.<sup>36</sup> Despite their previous military service, such Irish officers were marked out for observation at this time of heightened tension by virtue of their religion and nationality, and Williamson would be briefly imprisoned in the Tower of London on 18 November for allegedly excusing certain Irish Catholic officers from the oaths of allegiance and supremacy. Equally, there were other Irish Catholics whose previous activities would mark them out as potentially disloyal or dangerous: in November Richard Talbot was ordered to depart England within twelve days (weather permitting) and to return to Ireland.<sup>37</sup>

Allegations of an Irish dimension to a plot did not stem purely from the allegations of Titus Oates. They were plausible in themselves to an English Protestant audience, even if at this time such credulity as can be discerned was confined to the English political elite. But the assumption that there was likely to be an Irish plot alongside (or within) the Popish Plot was perpetuated by other information of a similar nature that began to come to light. For example, the information of the informer William Bedloe, as presented to the Lords in November, claimed that the earls of Shaftesbury and Monmouth (Charles's illegitimate son), 'Mr Oneale' (sic), and Ormond's eldest son Thomas Butler, earl of Ossory, along with Ormond himself, were all to have been assassinated.<sup>38</sup> Further information received in November incriminated one 'John Dormer', an Irish priest in Rome who 'did carry the commission for the Irish officers in order to the raising of a rebellion in that Kingdom', and who was involved in August 1678 in 'conspiring the Kings death and the subversion of the Protestant religion'; he was to be taken into custody if found.<sup>39</sup> Particular attention was paid to

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<sup>36</sup> Williamson to Mayor of Chester, 9 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Rep.* 8, *app.* 1, *sec.* 2, 390b).

<sup>37</sup> Pass for Richard Talbot for Ireland, 14 Nov. 1678 (*CSPD*, 1678, p. 521).

<sup>38</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 352.

<sup>39</sup> PRO PC 6/14, 17 (12 Nov. 1679).

such allegations in the English House of Lords; this was simply part of its regular business, but Irish matters were becoming a regular feature.

In mid November the lords gave permission to allow Irish officers to remain in England, but they also requested that the Spanish ambassador surrender one 'Dominick MacQuin' (who despite his name, subsequently turned out to be Spanish).<sup>40</sup> On 29 November Essex reported how 'Daniel MacCarty, a Romish priest' was imprisoned in Norfolk, and the lords requested that he be brought before them.<sup>41</sup> And on 5 December the lords requested that Martin French, an Augustinian who had previously made allegations against James Lynch, the archbishop of Tuam, be brought from Ireland to testify before them.<sup>42</sup> In May 1670 French had accused Lynch of, amongst other things, 'having said King James was in hell, and that his son Charles was justly beheaded'.<sup>43</sup> Lynch was subsequently prosecuted, but was found not guilty. French held a grudge against Lynch, and made further accusations against him in 1674 that saw the archbishop imprisoned in Galway. Lynch subsequently went into exile in Spain, travelling to Madrid, where he was later appointed honorary chaplain to Charles II of Spain. Thus, allegations previously made against Lynch could dovetail with what Oates had correctly stated: that Lynch had spent time in Madrid.

However, while the English Parliament could attempt to control or investigate the activities of the Irish in England, it had no automatic jurisdiction over Ireland. If there was indeed an Irish plot it obviously had its basis in Ireland, so Ormond's administration in Dublin was best placed to address any such plot. The measures undertaken by Ormond and his government in response to the Popish Plot will be discussed at length in section three. However, there was a degree of uncertainty in England as to whether the Irish administration was actually doing anything to deal with the possibility of the existence of such a plot as was alleged.

In Ireland, Orrery had already told Ormond that he had advance notice of Oates's allegations from 'some friends in London'.<sup>44</sup> Such traffic naturally went both ways. In December 1678 Orrery also informed his friend Sir John Malet, the zealously Protestant MP for Minehead in Somerset, that despite the fact that proclamations had

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<sup>40</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, pp 357, 360.

<sup>41</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 393.

<sup>42</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 402.

<sup>43</sup> Plunkett to John Brenan, 14 May 1670 (Hanly, *Plunkett letters*, pp 84-7).

<sup>44</sup> Orrery to Ormond, 10 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 270-4).

been issued in Ireland banishing Catholic priests, and demanding that Catholics surrender their weapons, few priests had departed and few weapons were recovered; thus, the implication was that the proclamations were not being enforced.<sup>45</sup> Even prior to this, there were rumours circulating in London that Ireland was being left in a vulnerable position, with Catholic regiments abroad in the kingdom and Dublin itself being left unguarded.<sup>46</sup> There was subsequently a soothing report printed in London confirming the security measures undertaken by the Irish government, such as the arrest of Peter and Richard Talbot, along with the various proclamations that had been issued. Londoners were assured of 'very frequent meetings of the Council here; and although the Irish be in number very disproportionate to us, yet we are in perfect quiet, and in all probability like so to continue. For besides the army, our militia is raised, and in such a readiness that, with the blessing of God, we have nothing to fear'.<sup>47</sup> This corresponded to Ormond's own assessment of the situation, but it stood at odds to other perceptions of the condition of Ireland extant at this time.

The House of Lords was not the only institution to interest itself in Irish matters. The Mayor of Chester was ordered to send one 'Burck' (sic), an Irishman, for examination before the Privy Council; he had already been examined in Chester (which as a major port on the Irish Sea accounted for much of the traffic back and forth between England and Ireland), but this was not to be made public lest it 'prejudice the Kings service hereafter'.<sup>48</sup> Sir Henry Coventry, the English secretary of state for the southern department, requested that any examination be kept private and forwarded to him, though 'if he hath since done any disservice to the crown that shall be no protection'.<sup>49</sup>

In December 1678 further allegations of Irish plotting were related to the House of Lords. One 'Mr Shadwell' alleged that James Lynch had claimed that York was a Catholic (which was no revelation in itself) but bolstered this with sinister insinuations of Lynch's hostility to Charles II. However, these allegations were largely derived from

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<sup>45</sup> Orrery to Malet, 3 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Rep. 5, app.*, p. 318).

<sup>46</sup> Anglesey to Ormond, 23 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 242-3)

<sup>47</sup> *London Gazette*, 5-9 Dec. 1678.

<sup>48</sup> Coventry to Mayor of Chester, 7 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Rep. 8, app. 1, sec.*, 2, 391a)

<sup>49</sup> Coventry to Mayor of Chester, 7 Dec. 1678 (BL Add. MS 25,124, f. 182)

those previously made against Lynch by Martin French.<sup>50</sup> But on 23 December it was reported to the lords that Lynch was now in custody.<sup>51</sup>

By this time, however, another informer, Edmund Everard, provided fuller allegations of an Irish Catholic plot to the lords; he may himself have been of Irish extraction, but this remains uncertain. He claimed to have known of an Irish plot for over five years, having been employed as an agent 'at the French court for the English militia concerns'. He had certainly been in Paris in the 1670s, during which time he had seemingly been a Catholic, and had been in contact with members of the Irish émigré community there. The plot, as he revealed it, resembled Oates's allegations in that a substantial role was accorded to both Ireland and Scotland, in a plot spearheaded by the French. Charles was to be murdered, Catholicism was to be restored, and York was to be placed on the throne. Key figures in this plot were Peter and Richard Talbot, both of whom Everard claimed to have met, and who had supposedly been negotiating with the French since 1670 about 'a business...which mightily concerns the welfare of the Catholics in England and especially in Ireland'.

The proposed plot corresponded to the model suggested by previous informers. It was to involve an insurrection in Ireland to secure 'a seaport town' for the French, though leading figures in England were also apparently assisting the plot. Peter Talbot apparently discussed the proposals in person with Louis, 'and though his Majesty [Louis] be of a morose temper yet he often smiled as at propositions that pleased him'. Talbot subsequently confirmed that he had discussed the plot that he had previously spoken of. Eventually Everard fell foul of the plotters, and Talbot threatened to have him imprisoned, 'which accordingly happened according to his spiteful prophecy'. Everard also implicated Sir Henry Coventry and Ormond's nephew Justin McCarthy, an Irish army officer who had served in the French service during the 1670s. Everard also went out of his way to praise Monmouth, who would later be held up as a potential Protestant alternative to York. He summed up his testimony by asserting that the fact that the Talbots were now imprisoned before he could give his evidence 'is an argument that long before these present times there were such matters spoken of by me

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<sup>50</sup> Information of 'J. Shadwell', 5 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Rep. 11, app. 2*, pp 21-2). I have been unable to precisely identify this informant.

<sup>51</sup> Information of 'Mr Ward', 23 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Rep. 11, app. 2*, p. 78).

in France, and that it came to the knowledge of many Irish'.<sup>52</sup> Everard claimed to have related this tale to Sir Robert Walsh in 1673; Walsh, who was himself apparently involved in this plot with the Talbots, had Everard imprisoned within a week, though Walsh later claimed that Everard had in fact been imprisoned for seeking to poison Monmouth.<sup>53</sup> However, there was no question but that Everard had been imprisoned: that in itself might lend credence to his allegations.

An Irish dimension was even revealed in the contentious murder of Sir Edmund Bury Godfrey. Miles Prance was a Catholic who had been suspected of involvement in Godfrey's murder, and who had been arrested after a false accusation by a lodger who owed him money. At first he denied the allegations, but he later testified before the lords committee investigating Godfrey's murder, seemingly for fear of execution.

Prance claimed that one 'Gerald' had supposedly offered him money to kill an unspecified man. 'He said it was no sin to kill him, because he was a wicked man, and had done the Queen and the Irish ill-service'. This was subsequently denied by Lawrence Hill, one of those implicated by Prance, who 'never saw Fitzgerald, the Irish priest': presumably the person in question.<sup>54</sup> The ostensible involvement of this Fitzgerald in the murder would still be mentioned in the Whig press a year later.<sup>55</sup> Prance also mentioned that Gerald and 'one [Robert] Greene, an Irishman' supposedly employed at Somerset House (which was previously searched on behalf of the Lords by, amongst others, Ormond's younger son Richard Butler, earl of Arran) sought to involve him in Godfrey's murder; he claimed that Godfrey was murdered by Greene and a number of others in Somerset House, assisted by yet another, unnamed Irishman. Robert Greene, when examined, denied any involvement in the murder, but conceded the presence of 'Kelly, an Irish priest', who had departed before the proclamation banishing Catholic clerics had been issued.<sup>56</sup> The next day 'Dominick Kelley' was charged in the Lords to be guilty of the murder of Edmund Bury Godfrey.<sup>57</sup> All of the

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<sup>52</sup> Information of Edmund Everard, 21 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Rep. 13, app. 6*, pp 141-45). A slightly amended version his testimony would be published c. April-May 1679, having been presented to the English House of Commons: *The depositions and examinations of Mr. Edmund Everard* (London, 1679).

<sup>53</sup> Liam Chambers, *Michael Moore, c.1639-1725: Provost of Trinity, Rector of Paris* (Dublin, 2005), p. 37.

<sup>54</sup> Information of Miles Prance, 27 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Rep. 11, app. 2*, pp 52).

<sup>55</sup> *Domestic Intelligence, or news both from city and country*. 14 July 1679.

<sup>56</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, pp 437-9.

<sup>57</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 441. These allegations against 'Dominick Kelly' would also be reiterated in print: *A true narrative of the late design of the Papists to charge their horrid plot upon the Protestants* (London, 1679), pp 6-7, 12.



individuals implicated here would later be named in the articles of impeachment directed at William Howard, Viscount Stafford.<sup>58</sup>

An alleged plot to murder Ormond (who was considered by some to favour Catholics) came to light at this time in Dublin. However, assassination by Catholics hardly denoted sympathy towards them, and the news of this plot would also be printed in London, hopefully driving the point home; in the official gazette, the attempt on Ormond's life had been the work of an apostate Protestant, John Jephson (whose father had been executed after Blood's Plot in 1663). Having been instigated by priests and Jesuits, the plan was foiled by Jephson's guilt and repentance.<sup>59</sup> Equally, the official line in the *London Gazette* soon after this was that Ormond had prudently dealt with 'all those that were suspected to design troubles in that country', and was arresting priests and banning masses with gusto while leaving Ireland 'in a very good posture of defence'.<sup>60</sup> Whilst this could be seen as an effort to deflect criticism of the viceroy in England, it also suggested that such efforts at reassurance with regards to the condition of Ireland were necessary. An account of this plot published in London in early 1679 went further: the Jesuits in Ireland who had orchestrated the plot ('these sons of Satan') 'are carrying on the same design as those in England', and Ormond's murder was, by implication, an integral part of this.<sup>61</sup> This was simply to reiterate one of the original allegations of Titus Oates, who had claimed that Ormond was to be murdered with the King. But the existence of such a plot strongly implied that Ormond was perceived as an obstacle to sinister Catholic designs, as opposed to being an integral part of them.

Soon after this came further depositions about an Irish plot. The informer Stephen Dugdale claimed that one 'Mr Evers', 'at several times, told me the Pope out [of] his revenues had granted sums of money towards the putting the Irish into a condition of opposing the now established government for it was his gracious pleasure to consider what a tyrannical government they lived under'.<sup>62</sup> Dugdale claimed to have seen a letter addressed to Evers from Paris stating that the Pope had confirmed his offer of support: 'the Pope did still hold his good purpose for the speedy relieving the poor

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<sup>58</sup> *Lords jn*, xiii, pp 500-1.

<sup>59</sup> *London Gazette*, 26-30 Dec. 1678.

<sup>60</sup> *London Gazette*, 2-6 Jan. 1679.

<sup>61</sup> *A true and perfect account of the discovery of a barbarous & bloody plot lately carried on by the Jesuites in Ireland for the destroying of the Duke of Ormond* (London, 1679), pp 2-4.

<sup>62</sup> Information of Stephen Dugdale, 11 Jan. 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 81, f. 488).

Irish'. Men as well as money were to be provided.<sup>63</sup> Within days Sir Henry Coventry wrote to Ormond to inform him of evidence that the Pope intended to aid Irish Catholics somehow; presumably a judgement based upon allegations made by Dugdale. There were fears of ongoing French preparations for an unspecified purpose; suspicions that this purpose was an attack on Ireland were not, admittedly, based on solid evidence. Prudence was required in the light of the information on Ireland: 'what relation this may have to those French preparations may be worth inquiry'.<sup>64</sup> Other information soon followed. Allegations were noted that an Irishman, James Netterville, was involved in dubious (though unspecified) transactions involving certain figures already named in the testimony of Miles Prance, and one Pierce Butler; they had sought to persuade the informant, William Brookes, into slandering Oates and William Bedloe for money.<sup>65</sup> Such cross-referencing of English and Irish allegations would have been suggestive of a broader conspiracy extending across both islands.

Dugdale subsequently expanded on his original allegations. 'He says that Arthur the Irish priest dined with the Lord Stafford at Tixell, and that Arthur told him and Evers of Whisle Bourn and several others engaged in the business of Ireland'.<sup>66</sup> Dugdale had been the steward of Walter Aston, third Lord Aston, on the latter's estates at Tixell in Staffordshire, until he was sacked for embezzlement and theft. His subsequent career as an informer was seemingly prompted by a desire to escape a prison sentence for debt. At Tixell, Arthur, who 'was towards fifty years of age, indifferent tall and slender, of a long visage, and brown complexion', had 'hoped it would appear in a short time which of the two nations would be found the best Christians, meaning Ireland would be found truest in that design, for the English would be false'. He stated that France would provide men and money (and that God would bless the enterprise). Arthur had mentioned the names of twenty priests and Jesuits, of whom Dugdale recalled three: White, French and Byrne.<sup>67</sup> The precise nature of the 'business of Ireland' was unclear here, but in the light of previous disclosures, the alleged involvement of the French would strongly imply that either an Irish rebellion or

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<sup>63</sup> Deposition of Stephen Dugdale, 11 Jan. 1679 (*HMC Rep. 13 app. 6*, p. 122-5).

<sup>64</sup> Coventry to Ormond, 14 Jan. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 303).

<sup>65</sup> Information of William Brooke, 19 Jan. 1679 (*CSPD, 1679*, pp 39-40)

<sup>66</sup> Deposition of Stephen Dugdale, 22 Jan. 1679 (*HMC Rep. 13 app. 6*, p 128).

<sup>67</sup> Deposition of Stephen Dugdale, 31 Jan 1679 (*HMC Rep. 13 app. 6*, p. 130).

a French invasion was planned, or in the light of previous allegations, perhaps a combination of both; the Pope was also implicated in this alleged plot.<sup>68</sup>

But there was another implication that was specific to these allegations of an Irish rebellion, and which drew upon the perception of previous events in order to predict the precise nature of such a rebellion. When, in January 1679, Stephen Dugdale alleged that the French and the Papacy had plans for an invasion of Ireland that would come at the expense of the Protestant interest there, according to Gilbert Burnet his claims carried a particular resonance, for 'the memory of the Irish massacre was yet so fresh, as [to] raise a particular horror at the very mention of this'.<sup>69</sup> By this Burnet meant the Irish rebellion of 1641, perceived by many in both Ireland and England as having been nothing less than a sectarian massacre of Protestant settlers.

On 23 December 1678 an anonymous pamphlet had been licensed that took as its subject the Irish rebellion of 1641, or more particularly the atrocities against Protestants (English and Scottish) allegedly committed by the native Irish during it.<sup>70</sup> Committed with the connivance and encouragement of the clergy, as depicted in this work these atrocities consisted of numerous things: hanging, burning, burial alive, mutilation (such as the gouging out of eyes and the cutting of throats), starvation, exposure to the elements, and disembowelment, most especially of pregnant women. Children were fed to dogs, boiled alive and had their skulls smashed in, families were forced to kill one another, and 'such was their malice against the English, that they forced their children to kill English children.'<sup>71</sup> Wives and daughters were raped in front of their husbands and fathers ('with the basest villains they could pick out'<sup>72</sup>), and usually murdered afterwards. 'These merciless Irish Papists, having set a castle on fire, wherein were many Protestants, they rejoicingly said, O how sweetly they do fry!'<sup>73</sup> Over fifteen hundred Protestants were drowned in Portadown on numerous occasions (though their indignant ghosts returned seeking vengeance, vanishing once their message was understood by an English army). Nine hundred and fifty four Protestants

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<sup>68</sup> Information of Stephen Dugdale, 11 Jan 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 81, ff 488-91).

<sup>69</sup> Information of Stephen Dugdale, 31 Jan 1679 (*HMC Rep. 13, app. 6*, p. 130); Osmond Airy (ed), *Burnet's History of my own time*, (2 vol., Oxford, 1897-1900), ii, p. 195.

<sup>70</sup> *An account of the bloody massacre in Ireland: acted by the instigation of the Jesuits, Priests, and Friars* (London, 1679). This was a reprint of the relevant sections of *A looking glass for England* (London, 1667). The pamphlet of 1678 was also reprinted in 1689, in an edition with depictions of torture and a brief account of the Spanish inquisition: *A relation of the bloody massacre in Ireland, acted by the instigation of the Jesuits, Priests and Friars* (London, 1689).

<sup>71</sup> *An account of the bloody massacre in Ireland*, p. 4.

<sup>72</sup> *An account of the bloody massacre in Ireland*, p. 8.

<sup>73</sup> *An account of the bloody massacre in Ireland*, p. 5.

in Antrim were murdered in one morning.<sup>74</sup> In Sligo, forty Protestants were locked in a cellar to await the ministrations of a butcher and his axe, both of which arrived, appropriately, at midnight.<sup>75</sup> In Sligo the bodies of men and women would also be suitably arranged into what the author delicately termed ‘a most immodest posture’.<sup>76</sup> Given that the Irish were attacking Protestants, regardless of ethnicity they respected neither the sanctity of their persons or of the religion that marked them out; it too was attacked. Graves were desecrated and bibles set alight, for ‘it was hell-fire they burnt’.<sup>77</sup> In Kilkenny the head of a minister was attached to a cross in the market place. The mouth was cut open to the ears, and the rebels ‘laid a leaf of a Bible upon it, and bid him preach, for his mouth was wide enough’.<sup>78</sup> In a somewhat ignominious if no less cruel demise, a fat man was melted down to make candles for a mass. And by taking a passage from Sir John Temple’s notorious *Irish Rebellion* (which would be republished twice in London in 1679) the obvious question was asked.

All this wickedness they exercised upon the English, without any provocation given them. Alas! Who can comprehend the fears, terrors, anguish, bitterness and perplexity that seized upon the poor Protestants, finding themselves so suddenly surprised without remedy, and wrapped up in all kinds of outward miseries which could possibly by man be inflicted upon human kind?<sup>79</sup>

If the Popish Plot and subsequent Exclusion Crisis rested upon the assumption of an imminent Catholic attack on Protestants in the Stuart kingdoms, the perception of the 1641 rebellion as wholesale massacre meant that it became the most obvious and close example of what this might entail. Concerns about an ‘Irish plot’ rested upon the assumption that a rebellion akin to that of 1641 was on the verge of happening again, and being transposed to England: a latent fear derived from memory that could acquire a particular relevance at this juncture. The fears of an Irish rebellion and a Catholic succession were interrelated, and over time the possibility of the first of these happening would be proclaimed imminent to prevent the second coming to pass.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *An account of the bloody massacre in Ireland*, p. 6.

<sup>75</sup> *An account of the bloody massacre in Ireland*, p. 5.

<sup>76</sup> *An account of the bloody massacre in Ireland*, p. 6.

<sup>77</sup> *An account of the bloody massacre in Ireland*, p. 5.

<sup>78</sup> *An account of the bloody massacre in Ireland*, p. 5.

<sup>79</sup> *An account of the bloody massacre in Ireland*, p. 5. This passage copies and paraphrases Sir John Temple, *The Irish rebellion...with the barbarous cruelties and bloody massacres which ensued thereupon* (London, 1646), p. 104.

<sup>80</sup> Harris, *Restoration*, pp 146-52.

The Cavalier parliament was dissolved by Charles II on 24 January 1679, but by the end of the month the ostensible plot to murder Ormond that had been uncovered in Dublin was dealt with by the Privy Council. No evidence of any link to plots in England was evident, but such a link was suspected in the light of the allegations of Stephen Dugdale: a copy of his testimony ('touching a general disturbance in both kingdoms') was to be sent to Ormond in Dublin. The 'Byrne' who had been mentioned in Dugdale's testimony was possibly the same Byrne who was imprisoned in Dublin 'under so many marks of guilt', and who had been implicated in the assassination attempt. The conspirators were to be apprehended.<sup>81</sup> Byrne was subsequently imprisoned, but there was only one witness, so his trial was to be delayed until sufficient evidence could be found against him.<sup>82</sup> By order of the Privy Council, a number of papers and books found in the lodgings of John Fitzgerald, another figure suspected of involvement in the plot, were to be inspected by Henry Compton, the Bishop of London.<sup>83</sup> Fitzgerald was to be brought before the council in March.<sup>84</sup>

There were further allegations of an Irish plot in March, but these would eventually prove to have a greater resonance. They were made by Hubert Boark of Waterford, who according to his own account had been a deputy seneschal to Richard Power, earl of Tyrone; the latter had previously been governor of Waterford, had sat as MP for the same county, and had seen considerable military service abroad. He was also the son-in-law of Arthur Annesley, earl of Anglesey, the Irish born lord privy seal who, perhaps unsurprisingly, would eventually decline to support his fellow peers belief in the existence of an Irish plot. Boark claimed that Tyrone had mentioned to him the possibility of an imminent French invasion of Ireland, which surprised Boark, who considered it more likely that this would happen in England. Tyrone produced a list of names of prospective confederates, and asked Boark to join them, whilst promising to return his estate to him if he did so. Boark refused, and Tyrone threatened to kill him, and subsequently had him seized; he was to be framed for threatening one John Daniell, and was subsequently imprisoned in Waterford without bail, which was denied him.<sup>85</sup> Tyrone naturally denied these allegations, and denied ever employing Boark, whom he

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<sup>81</sup> PRO PC 2/67, 69 (31 Jan. 1679).

<sup>82</sup> PRO PC 2/67, 154 (nd).

<sup>83</sup> PRO PC 2/67, 79 (5 Feb. 1679).

<sup>84</sup> PRO PC 6/14, 20 (9 Mar. 1679).

<sup>85</sup> Examination of Hubert Boark, 18 Mar. 1679 (BL Add. MS 34,772, f. 5).

claimed had a somewhat dubious reputation. He also stated that Daniell was a blacksmith, and that Boark had been imprisoned for the simple misdemeanour of assaulting him. Daniell himself denied any knowledge of any invasion, apart from 'the general rumour of the country'. Tyrone denied all of the charges, and also denied that Boark had ever had an estate, and that rather than bail being denied, Boark had simply been unable to pay it.<sup>86</sup>

However, the accumulation of broadly similar allegations about an Irish plot ensured that the English parliament, newly dominated as it was by the Whig opposition, would become increasingly preoccupied with such assertions, given that it was increasingly concerned with the Popish plot in general (indeed, the London republication of Henry Jones's *Sermon of Antichrist* in March 1679 may have been linked to the impending parliamentary session). According to one of Ormond's informants writing on 22 March, 'both houses this day expressed great concern and zeal against Papists and Popery', and at least some members of the English political elite were of the opinion that the Irish government – and by implication Ormond – was 'too indulgent to Papists'.<sup>87</sup> Finally, and perhaps most significantly, at a council meeting on Ireland 'my Lord Shaftesbury in his ingenuous manner shook his head and said he did not like the management of affairs there'.<sup>88</sup>

There was bad blood between Shaftesbury on the one hand, and Ormond and Ossory on the other, since the 1660s.<sup>89</sup> When Shaftesbury some days later pointed to the dangers of Scotland and Ireland in the House of Lords ('That kingdom cannot long continue in English hands, if some better care be not taken of it') it was an implicit criticism of Ormond and his conduct, so Ossory offered a riposte, asserting that his father had served the crown loyally in the 1640s, and had never advocated peace with France, war with Holland, or religious toleration.<sup>90</sup> He informed Ormond of the incident, of his opinion that Essex intended to succeed him as viceroy, and that he intended to furnish the Lords with an account of the Irish government's proceedings since the onset of the plot revelations.<sup>91</sup> Sir Cyril Wyche, the Irish chief secretary (who was in fact resident in London throughout the period), concurred about the provision of

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<sup>86</sup> Examination of Rt Hon. Richard, earl of Tyrone, 20 Mar. 1679 (BL Add MS 34,772, f. 6).

<sup>87</sup> Col Edward Cooke to Ormond, 22 Mar. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 368-71).

<sup>88</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 22 Mar. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 366-7).

<sup>89</sup> Haley, *Shaftesbury*, pp 187-90.

<sup>90</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, i, p 273-76; *Parl. Hist.*, iv, col. 1115-8; for Ossory's response, see Marshes Library, MS Z 3.1.1 f.116.

<sup>91</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 25 Mar. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 1-2).

such an account, and both Coventry and Ormond's ally Francis Aungier, earl of Longford, suggested that Arran be dispatched to London to counter any allegations of misconduct on Ormond's part. Longford also sent Ormond a copy of Shaftesbury's speech 'that your Grace may from thence see how necessary it is to look about you', and warning him that moves were being made against him, involving Shaftesbury and deriving credence from his alleged conduct in Ireland.<sup>92</sup>

On 31 March Ossory presented his report on Ireland to the lords.<sup>93</sup> This account of the Irish government's proceedings offered no radical analysis or prescription. It was similar, perhaps identical, to a report that the Irish administration had decided to compile before Christmas, and was subsequently published in London.<sup>94</sup> In reiterating the orders issued by the Privy Council, it recounted how they had been carried out: the arrest of the Talbots and their subsequent examinations, the expulsion of Catholic clergy from Ireland, and the various other security measures undertaken. It listed the proclamations issued and their purpose, and the measures taken against other individuals, including a number of Jesuits. Defensive measures undertaken were also recounted: the disarming of Catholics and the securing of garrisons, and the attempts to put the militia back into a state of readiness. True, many of the Irish expelled from corporate towns (as ordered) had returned. But, it was argued, they were allowed back by those English who had required their services. Ormond himself had acted as a guarantor for the purchase of extra weapons, and military arrangements were as good as could be expected without extra finance from an Irish parliament (which was in itself a hint). Finally, it outlined what had been the guiding principle of the Irish government over the preceding months: Ireland and England were too different to be subject to the same laws and policies. Prudence and leniency marked out a wiser course than outright repression, and for the time being, there was no overriding reason to alter this position. However, the House of Lords continued to build upon its burgeoning concerns with Irish matters by instructing the Inns of Court to provide lists of Irish and Catholic students, and to expel any students who declined to take the oaths of allegiance and

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<sup>92</sup> Longford to Ormond, 29 March 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 4-5); Wyche to Ormond, 29 Mar. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 5).

<sup>93</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, pp 488-91.

<sup>94</sup> 'A narrative of the proceedings of the Lord Lieutenant and Council in Ireland since the intimation to them...of the plot in England', 31 Mar. 1679 (NLI Ormond MS 2,385, ff 7-20) (printed in *HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 15-20); 'A narration of the proceedings', 5 April 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, os, ii, p. 254-58); Ormond to Southwell, 18 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, os, ii, p 282-83); *An account of the publick affairs in Ireland since the discovery of the late plot* (London, 1679).

supremacy.<sup>95</sup> There was a latent fear of the (Catholic) enemy within, which in the parliamentary session of March-May 1679 became relevant to one key institution: the navy.

During the 1670s the English navy had increasingly come to be seen as a vital defence against the French, but this potential utility was offset by fears of Catholic influence in it. York had been lord high admiral until 1673, and it was feared that he had both appointed Catholic officers, and continued to exert an influence over the nature and composition of the navy, which was 'the sole viable defence against France and the antichrist, and yet given James's influence over it, the navy might also be an instrument of French, Papist and arbitrary designs'.<sup>96</sup> Admittedly, the 1672 Test Act made it 'theoretically impossible for a Catholic to be any sort of officer, but what little evidence there is suggests that the act was never as rigorously enforced in the navy as it was in the army'.<sup>97</sup> For Catholic, one could easily read Irish. Samuel Pepys did. He noted how one officer was 'an Irishman, which among people designed to raise doubts will make his being a Papist much more easy for belief than his being an Englishman would do'.<sup>98</sup> Irish naval officers of Catholic extraction were automatically and explicitly suspect; indeed, even some Protestant Irish naval officers were suspected of covert Catholicism. It was believed, correctly, that York had indeed favoured Irish officers.<sup>99</sup>

Parliament was primarily interested in Irish matters as they impinged on events in England. Indeed, the lords had even demanded that lists be drawn up by the various Inns of Court and other educational institutions of 'Papists', 'reputed Papists', and Irishmen, a suggestive assessment that indicated that these categories were not considered to be too far apart.<sup>100</sup> It was suggested in the lords that the oaths of allegiance and supremacy be imposed upon all inhabitants of Dublin, 'and other ports and forts in Ireland'. The lords also ordered that Colonel John Fitzpatrick, another prominent Catholic figure, be confined to his home, and that he be barred from entering within twenty miles of Dublin without the permission of the lord lieutenant: his cousin,

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<sup>95</sup> *Lords jn.* xiii, p. 487.

<sup>96</sup> J.D. Davies, 'The navy, parliament and political crisis in the reign of Charles II', *Historical Journal*, 36 (1993), p. 287.

<sup>97</sup> Hector McDonnell, 'Irishmen in the Stuart navy, 1660-90', *The Irish Sword*, 16 (1985), p. 87.

<sup>98</sup> Cited in Davies, 'The navy, parliament and political crisis', p. 275.

<sup>99</sup> Davies, 'The navy, parliament and political crisis', pp 275, 278, 280. An Irish Catholic naval officer, Randell MacDonald, would pilot the boat containing York (then James II) to France in December 1688.

<sup>100</sup> Returns of Papists in the Inns of Court, Doctor's Commons, and Herald's College, 29 Mar. 1679 (*HMC Rep. 11 app. 2*, pp 103-4).



Ormond.<sup>101</sup> The following day, 1 April, the lords sat as a committee to consider Ireland, and resolved to address the king to request that Catholics in Ireland be disarmed, and that Protestants be supplied with weapons in turn: weapons were now to be sent to Ireland for exclusively Protestant usage. It was also suggested that a proviso barring Catholics from serving on juries be entered into the Irish bills then under consideration; this was agreed to.<sup>102</sup> Yet at the same time the lords could see fit to suggest releasing Irishmen from custody in Wales, though whether this was actually done is unclear.<sup>103</sup> This seemed an unusual decision: South Wales provided an important dimension to the Popish Plot. Welsh informers had accused Welsh magnates of complicity in the plot; there were also allegations that Wales would be the location for an invasion. A vibrant and substantial Catholic community in the region ensured that the Popish Plot had notably violent consequences here; hardly the best situation in which to release Irish Catholic suspects.<sup>104</sup> However, the deliberations of the lords in early April 1679 saw moves being made to bar Catholics from practising law, being clerks of the peace, or sheriffs, without submitting to the oaths. There was also a demand for the names of guardians of children and indeed children themselves, to determine who was being educated in which religion. More generally, demands were made that Ormond be ordered to crack down on Jesuits and priests.<sup>105</sup>

A greater concern with Irish matters seemed evident in April 1679. On 15 April the Lords, sitting once again as a committee of the whole house, addressed the King demanding that Ormond be ordered to seize any Catholics deemed dangerous in Ireland.<sup>106</sup> Two days later they ordered that Essex, Orrery's brother Richard Boyle, earl of Burlington, Ossory, Robartes and John Egerton, earl of Bridgewater, should beseech Charles to order the reinforcement of laws in Ireland regarding the disarming of Catholics. Protestants were also to be armed, and the militia adequately equipped; Protestants were also to be permitted to purchase weapons at a cheap price. The lords also reiterated their disparate demands for the compilation of lists of children, a crackdown on Jesuits and priests, and the securing of Catholics, all of which was predicated on 'account of the late horrid conspiracy, and the present prospect of

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<sup>101</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p 491.

<sup>102</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p 493.

<sup>103</sup> Draft order, 22 May 1679 (*HMC Rep. 11 app. 2*, p 152).

<sup>104</sup> Peter Jenkins, 'Anti-popery on the Welsh marches in the seventeenth-century' in *Historical Journal* 23 (1980), pp 275-93.

<sup>105</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 499.

<sup>106</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 518.

affairs'.<sup>107</sup> To facilitate one of their principle demands, the lords subsequently recommended to the Privy Council that Protestant merchants be licensed to trade in arms to Ireland, to be sold to Protestants only.<sup>108</sup> On 15 May the first reading of the bill to exclude York from the succession took place. But Charles's response was to prorogue parliament on 27 May, thence to dissolve it on 12 July.

The Privy Council essentially concurred with the demands of the lords, and they subsequently instructed Ormond's administration that Protestant merchants were to be permitted to import weapons for use by Protestants. Catholics were to be disarmed, and pressure was to be maintained on them in this regard with frequent searches to be conducted. The militia was also to be armed, as more weapons were promised to them from England; these measures were to be strictly regulated. But they also reassured Ormond that his efforts were being appreciated.<sup>109</sup>

In Ireland there was a degree of confusion about the continual allegations of plots. 'We have had most dreadful accounts of massacres in Ireland and French landing and putting all Protestants to fire and sword, but of this we have no confirmation these three weeks'.<sup>110</sup> Troublesome Irish tenants were a more pertinent difficulty to a figure such as Philip Perceval, given their apparent propensity to ruin the land before running off to become Tories. 'My good grandfather has taken what care he could to drain the estate of such people' and replace them with English tenants, 'yet there are still some troublesome neighbours that remain behind'.<sup>111</sup> Yet such latent concerns could by no means be categorised as fears of a rebellion in Ireland. This apparently quiescent situation may have influenced the Privy Council's decision to release Richard Talbot, who had been imprisoned for six months in Dublin Castle, on health grounds under a £10,000 surety; in early July he was even permitted to go to France for treatment.<sup>112</sup> They also ordered the release of Mountgarret, who was to be bailed on health grounds on foot of a petition forwarded to London by Ormond, who was responsible for where he was to reside.<sup>113</sup> Thus, two figures named and implicated in the supposed Irish plot

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<sup>107</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, pp 527-8.

<sup>108</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p 556.

<sup>109</sup> PRO PC 2/68, 59 (28 May 1679)

<sup>110</sup> Sir Nicholas L'Estrange to John Perceval, 7 June 1679 (*HMC Egmont*, ii, p 82).

<sup>111</sup> Sir Philip Perceval to Southwell, 27 June 1679 (*HMC Egmont*, ii, p 82)

<sup>112</sup> PRO PC 2/68, 141 (23 June 1679); PRO PC 2/68, 174 (11 July 1679).

<sup>113</sup> PRO PC 2/68, 183 (24 July 1679).

were released, albeit under certain conditions; hardly a suggestion of unwavering faith in the danger that they allegedly posed.

However, Ireland continued to lurk on the fringes of the Popish plot. At the opening of the trial of the five Jesuits (Fenwick, Groves, Harcourt, Turner and White) for alleged complicity in the plot on 13 June 1679, the prosecution had opened its case with a damning indictment of Catholicism: 'they kill the Protestants by thousands, without law or justice, witness their bloody doings at Mirandel, their massacre at Paris, their barbarous cruelty in Ireland, since the year 1640, and those in Piedmont, since 1650'.<sup>114</sup> Later in the same trial, Oates reiterated his claims of an Irish dimension to the plot.<sup>115</sup> At Sir George Wakeman's trial in July, Oates had repeated his earlier claims that there was an Irish plot, and that Peter Talbot was involved in it. An army was to be raised in Ireland, along with 'the poisoning of the duke of Ormond'.<sup>116</sup>

Whether or not the king's illness of August 1679 significantly, and directly, affected the ongoing Irish allegations seems unlikely. However, in September 1679 it was reported that 'Daniel Mac-Carte', 'a notorious Irish priest' had been captured on 25 August on the verge of giving the last rites to a woman in London, and had been identified by Oates.<sup>117</sup> And as the author of one anonymous broadsheet concluded, 'such circumstances as these induce us to believe, that the Papists are so far from being discouraged in their hopes of perpetuating their late horrid conspiracy, that they still proceed in it and pursue it, with fresh vigour'.<sup>118</sup> Soon after this a proclamation was issued offering a reward of 100 L for information on the 'four ruffians appointed in the late traitorous conspiracy to go to Windsor to assassinate the King', three of whom were apparently Irish; a pardon would be forthcoming to anyone who could provide such information by 20 October.<sup>119</sup> Essex also claimed to have information from Orrery about an alleged shipment of French arms en route to Cork, and it was notable that Ormond had not been informed of this first.<sup>120</sup> Towards the end of September the Privy Council also ordered Ormond that Fitzpatrick, who had previously been under house arrest, was to be imprisoned in Ireland, or indicted for high treason if he was not found,

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<sup>114</sup> *State trials*, vii, col. 321.

<sup>115</sup> *State trials*, vii, col. 327-8.

<sup>116</sup> *State trials*, vii, col. 631.

<sup>117</sup> 'Domestick Intelligence', 2 Sept. 1679 (*CSPD*, 1679-80, pp 234-5)

<sup>118</sup> *A true and perfect narrative of the manner and circumstance of apprehending that notorious Irish priest, Daniel Mac-Carte* (London, nd), p. 2.

<sup>119</sup> Proclamation, 8 Sept. 1679 (*CSPD*, 1679-80, p 238); *London Gazette*, 8-11 Sept 1679.

<sup>120</sup> Coventry to Ormond, 20 September 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 210-11)

and finally to be outlawed if he did not appear under the indictment.<sup>121</sup> A report in the press in October 1679 stated that 'letters from Ireland, give an account of a dangerous and mischievous design, which has been lately discovered there, contrived by the Popish faction, for the destruction of the Protestants'. Weapons had been discovered, and 'a considerable person' - possibly Fitzpatrick - was thereby implicated.<sup>122</sup> October would see the return of a parliament that was broadly in favour of exclusion, however defined, but the possibility that it would become a forum for grievances about Ireland (or anything else) was forestalled by its prorogation until the following year.

It was undoubtedly the case that Ireland's role within the Popish plot as it emerged in England saw the government in Dublin increasingly sidelined in the investigations, as its autonomy was increasingly subordinated. A warrant issued in November 1679 for the arrest of two of the ostensible Irish assassins of the King - Patrick Lavallyan and Denis O'Kearney - was applicable to Ireland, as both suspects were believed to be there. Lavallyan was apparently from Cork, and had served in Lord Clare's regiment in the Netherlands during the 1670s before deserting to avoid a court-martial.<sup>123</sup> When captured they were to be handed over to Ormond, who was to provide all necessary assistance, but afterwards he was simply to ensure that they were sent to England.<sup>124</sup> More active measures were to be undertaken in Ireland at the behest of the English government. In late November both King and council instructed Ormond to prepare bills for the exclusion of Catholics from parliament and state office, for the implementation of the test acts, 'and such other necessary bills for suppressing Popery'; a proclamation was also to be issued seeking further information on the plot in Ireland.<sup>125</sup> In the meantime, both Peter Walsh and John Fitzgerald were to be confined to their homes.<sup>126</sup>

On 6 December 1679 Oliver Plunkett was arrested near Dublin. It was naturally reported in London in the official government gazette, presumably to demonstrate the zeal of the government, as were the ongoing accusations of high treason against Tyrone, and the existence of witnesses to prove this.<sup>127</sup> The essence of this particular plot resembled its predecessors: the Jesuits were supposedly at the vanguard of a plot to

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<sup>121</sup> PRO PC 2/68, 206 (19 Sept 1679).

<sup>122</sup> *Domestic Intelligence*, 3 Oct. 1679.

<sup>123</sup> John Mulcahy, 'Patrick Lavallin and the Popish Plot', *Journal of the Cork Historical & Archaeological Society*, 99 (1994), pp 83-95.

<sup>124</sup> 'Warrant to Captain Thomas Fitzgerald', 12 Nov. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p 236)

<sup>125</sup> PRO PC 2/68, 291 (28 Nov. 1679).

<sup>126</sup> PRO PC 2/68, 311 (10 Dec. 1679).

<sup>127</sup> *London Gazette*, 11-15 Dec. 1679.

capture Limerick; troops were being raised for this purpose, and foreign assistance was being solicited. The elusive Lavallyan was also reported to be near Limerick.<sup>128</sup> This was soon expanded upon: it was ‘a new hellish Popish Plot in Ireland, carried on by the Papists in the province of Munster’. Tyrone was implicated in this plan, which involved assisting a French invasion force to capture Limerick and ‘cut the poor Protestants throats’.<sup>129</sup> By mid-October 1679, Ormond had sent an account of ‘the plot David Fitzgerald undertook to discover’ to London, adding that he had not completed his investigations before ‘my Lord of Orrery got notice of it, writ it over, and so it is gotten into print, with such reflections and remarks as I doubt not he designed’.<sup>130</sup> Fitzgerald was a Limerick Protestant who would later play a major role in the development (and eventual collapse) of such allegations about a Catholic conspiracy in Ireland, but this published text was based mainly on the allegations made against Tyrone by another informer, John MacNamara, and concerned itself with a plan to capture Limerick and to massacre the Protestant inhabitants. However, publication seemed to render further investigation of these allegations worthless by providing advance warning to those who he might have implicated.<sup>131</sup> This was a serious matter, as Ormond was willing to concede the very real possibility that the claims were actually true. It was bound to magnify his dislike and distrust of Orrery, whom Ormond had previously accused of deliberately misrepresenting his conduct as viceroy (though Orrery’s death on 16 October 1679 would naturally alleviate such concerns).

Hints and insinuations about the presence or activities of Irishmen were continually noted in London: ‘twenty Irish Papists lay about town’, and these ostensible malefactors were supposedly in receipt of pensions from ‘Lord Douglas’.<sup>132</sup> It was also reported in London that Irish Protestants were aware that the plot that seemed to pose so much danger to them was of a long gestation.<sup>133</sup> Given the events of the seventeenth century, such sentiments were unsurprising within Ireland’s sectarian polity. The continual allegations of an Irish dimension to the Popish Plot were perhaps understandable, and over time more active measures were taken to get to the bottom of them.

<sup>128</sup> *Domestic Intelligence*, 12 Dec. 1679.

<sup>129</sup> *Domestic Intelligence*, 16 Dec. 1679.

<sup>130</sup> Ormond to Ossory, 18 Oct. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 223-4).

<sup>131</sup> *A full and true relation of a new hellish Popish Plot in Ireland, carried on by the Papists in the province of Munster* (London, 1679). This pamphlet is dated 6 December 1680. However, it is the only published text I have found that substantively corresponds with what was alleged at this juncture.

<sup>132</sup> Information of Jane Palmer, 18 Dec. 1679 (*HMC Rep. 11*, app 2, p 148).

<sup>133</sup> *Domestic Intelligence*, 6 Jan. 1680.

One of Tyrone's accusers, Hubert Boark, had already been brought to Dublin in April 1679 to account for himself in the light of what he had alleged. Tyrone had subsequently requested permission to attend the council board, and the opportunity was availed of to examine him.<sup>134</sup> In February 1680 the information of Boark and a number of others against Tyrone was presented to the Privy Council, and thence to the committee for Irish affairs, to which Lauderdale was appointed less than two weeks later.<sup>135</sup> Irish informers were becoming increasingly prominent. One such figure ('Egan alias Fitzgerald'), was to travel to Cork with letters from Essex and Sunderland for Viscount Shannon and Captain Henry Boyle (or other suitably reliable justices) to search for arms and papers related to the plot, with a party of horse if required. Whatever was found was to be examined, copied and the originals were to be sent on to Sunderland.<sup>136</sup> Within days Ormond had been informed that the Privy Council had examined papers relating to the allegations made against Tyrone and Theobald Burke, Lord Brittas, that were seemingly related to plans for a French invasion and the capture of Limerick. Those accused had been bailed, but were now to be arrested for high treason.<sup>137</sup> On foot of this information, Tyrone, Brittas and an Irish soldier in the French service, Pierce Lacy, were to be imprisoned. The peers were to be tried first, 'and that in order thereunto, preparations be made for the speedy calling of a parliament in that Kingdom'.<sup>138</sup> However, there was also the awkward reality that the indictments against Tyrone for high treason had previously been declared *ignoramus* at a sitting of the Waterford assizes.<sup>139</sup>

The fact that the allegations against Tyrone had already been thrown out by an Irish jury could naturally damage the credibility of claims that there was an ongoing Irish plot. However, in March 1680 Shaftesbury claimed to have obtained more information on an Irish plot; specifically that provided by Edmund Murphy to William Hetherington, an obscure if dubious individual that Murphy had met while imprisoned in Dundalk. Little can be discerned about these two. Hetherington was apparently from Ganderstown, Co. Louth. Little is known of his early life, but in 1667 he was employed to hunt Tories in Laois and Offaly by Theophilus Jones. Having been imprisoned in Dundalk in 1679 for debt and for dealings with Tories, Hetherington met Edmund

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<sup>134</sup> Ormond to Coventry, 11 Apr. 1679 (BL Add MS 37,772, f. 15).

<sup>135</sup> PRO PC 2/68, 382 (6 Feb. 1680); PRO PC 2/68, 391 (18 Feb 1680).

<sup>136</sup> 'Instructions for A.B. (Egan alias Fitzgerald)', 19 Feb 1680 (*CSPD, 1679-80*, pp 394-5).

<sup>137</sup> Coventry to Ormond, 21 Feb. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p 278).

<sup>138</sup> PRO PC 2/68, 426 (20 Feb. 1680).

<sup>139</sup> Francis Gwyn to Ormond, 23 Mar. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p 422).

Murphy, and persuaded him to swear to the existence of a Catholic plot in Ireland. Hetherington seemingly escaped from custody *circa* May 1679, and eventually went to London, presenting himself to Shaftesbury in February 1680. He had appeared before the Privy Council on 24 March 1680, and sought to implicate Oliver Plunkett and Ormond in a Catholic plot. His accusations were given credence, and he was subsequently sent back to Ireland to obtain further evidence. The evidence he had presented to the Privy Council had come from Edmund Murphy. Born in county Armagh, Murphy remains obscure, but in June 1670 Plunkett had recommended him for the position of chanter of Armagh. The post of chanter went with that of parish priest of Killeavy, which Murphy already held. Two other clerics were linked to this parish: John MacMoyer, who was appointed curate of Killeavy in 1674, and Hugh Duffy, who also claimed to have served as curate of the parish. All three men were linked to Tory activity in the area, and all later became informers against Plunkett, who had suspended Murphy in 1674 for drunkenness and dealings with Tories, but later reinstated him. Murphy had been a strident opponent of the Armagh Tory Redmond O'Hanlon, both preaching against him and supposedly seeking to have him killed. Imprisoned in Dundalk in 1679, Murphy met Hetherington, whom he joined in claiming knowledge of an imminent Irish rebellion with French assistance in which they both implicated Plunkett. Hetherington had subsequently gone to London, but Murphy had definitely broke jail (having been imprisoned for receiving stolen goods from Tories).<sup>140</sup> Both would play a prominent role in the events of the following months.

These new allegations implicated Oliver Plunkett in a plan that 'was to no other intent but to ruin the king and his three kingdoms and to bring in popery'.<sup>141</sup> In the aftermath of this ostensible revelation it was resolved that a committee of the Privy Council, including Coventry, Bridgewater and Henry Compton, be appointed to investigate the allegations now presented by Shaftesbury, who seems to have maintained an interest in Irish affairs.<sup>142</sup> Both Essex and Shaftesbury were subsequently reported to be members of this committee, but the secrecy surrounding its proceedings

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<sup>140</sup> Ormond to unknown, 12 Apr. 1680 (Bodl., Carte MS 146, pp 258-9).

<sup>141</sup> 'The information of William Hetherington of Ganderstown in the county of Louth', 23 Mar. 1680 (PRO, Shaftesbury papers 30/24/50 f.163).

<sup>142</sup> PRO PC 2/68, 454 (24 Mar 1680). A list of members of the Irish Privy Council (presumably written before Orrery's death in October 1679) contained in Shaftesbury's papers assessed their level of zeal for Protestantism. Orrery, Conway, Hans Hamilton, Henry Ingoldsby and Theophilus Jones were all assumed to be 'zealous', whilst Granard, Henry Jones and Massareene were deemed 'very zealous': PRO, Shaftesbury papers 30/24/50 f.163.

was noted, and virtually no information emerged from it.<sup>143</sup> It remains unclear whether such a committee was ever actually convened, but either way, Ireland's role in the plot was by no means over, as Shaftesbury proceeded to elaborate on the significance of what he had uncovered. Again, the fundamental feature was to be a massacre of Protestants with foreign (specifically French) assistance. The demand for a committee of the Privy Council to investigate these allegations was apparently rejected, and the names of both those accused and their accusers were kept secret, though the involvement of four Catholic bishops was hinted at.<sup>144</sup>

In late March 1680 a report was published in London about the activities of a Franciscan friar, John Fitzgerald, who was en route to Cork to uncover incriminating letters related to the plot that were supposedly hidden in a wall: presumably the same individual who had previously been ordered to do so. Letters had been found in his lodgings, that 'proved to be in his own hand writing, and were filled with abominable treasons against his sacred majesties life, and the Protestant religion, and contained the same things that the letters he said did, that were to be found hid in the wall in Ireland'.<sup>145</sup> In other words, it could safely be assumed that there were no incriminating papers hidden in the wall, and that these were in fact the letters that were to have been found in the wall, though his seizure whilst seemingly in the process of forging testimony was attributed to misplaced zeal.<sup>146</sup> When the location was subsequently examined nothing was found, though it was conceded that the description of the location was at least correct. Fitzgerald had informed Shannon that he had witnessed incriminating papers being sealed up in the wall of an abbey at Galbally. Yet while his account of the location was seemingly precise, the relevant wall had been destroyed; the locals could provide no accurate information as to when this had actually happened.<sup>147</sup> By April Fitzgerald was en route to Ireland once again, having apparently sidestepped this difficulty, and the creation of a specific committee to investigate the Irish plot was also reported publicly, though the necessity for secrecy in its proceedings was also emphasised.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> *Protestant (Domestick) Intelligence*, 2 Apr. 1680; 6 Apr. 1680.

<sup>144</sup> Newsletter to Christopher Bowman, 30 Mar. 1680 (*CSPD, 1679-80*, pp 426-27).

<sup>145</sup> *Protestant (Domestick) Intelligence*, 23 Mar 1680; Newsletter to Christopher Bowman, 25 Mar. 1680 (*CSPD, 1679-80*, pp 423-4).

<sup>146</sup> *The True News: or, Mercurius Anglicus*, 24-8 Mar. 1680.

<sup>147</sup> Shannon to Sunderland, 10 Apr. 1680 (*CSPD, 1679-80*, p 435; PRO SP 63/339/77)

<sup>148</sup> *The Protestant (Domestick) Intelligence, or, news both from city and country*. 2 Apr 1680; 6 Apr. 1680.



If a leading Whig such as Shaftesbury was willing to promote these new allegations, there were cogent reasons for doing so that arose from the ongoing exclusion campaign, as directed at the duke of York. In seeking to exclude York from the succession on the grounds that he was Catholic, it was necessary to emphasise that a Catholic monarch would have dangerous implications for the Protestants of the three Stuart kingdoms. The most obvious means of doing this was to reiterate stock images of Catholic animosity and brutality towards Protestants, and in English eyes, immediately relevant examples of such activity were to be found in the perceived and actual atrocities committed against Protestant settlers in Ireland during the 1641 rebellion. Catholic and Irish were virtually synonymous terms in English political discourse, and while England lacked examples of what Catholics might potentially do should they be given the chance, Ireland could provide them. For Shaftesbury and his associates, this meant raising the spectre of an Irish plot that was to culminate in a rebellion along the lines of that of 1641, as he subsequently sought to do. The aftermath of Shaftesbury's revelations was a renewed impetus to the plot allegations. Most particularly this stemmed from the testimony of Edmund Murphy, though equally 'Serjeant Osborne hath given a very bad character of him'.<sup>149</sup> But there was an embargo placed on reports of what had transpired. The clerks of the council were withdrawn as the testimony was presented, though it was known to be about 'some design alleged to be of great danger to the Kingdom of Ireland'. Ormond had not been told of the details of this, though it was expected that Coventry would inform him, but the as yet anonymous informant had requested that Ormond not be informed of the information until 'some persons were brought out of Ireland'.<sup>150</sup> Charles subsequently ordered that 'the present stop on the Irish post be taken off'.<sup>151</sup>

Charles also instructed that the allegations of this alleged Irish plot be investigated more fully. The relevant examinations were to be continued until complete. In the meantime the informers were to be kept away from strangers, and publication of the findings was to be delayed until a full report had been given to the King.<sup>152</sup> By now further Irish witnesses were arriving in London, and in numbers. On 7 May two messengers (John Bradley and Thomas Atturbury) had reportedly arrived in London with another Edmund Murphy and a number of other prospective, if obscure,

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<sup>149</sup> Coventry to Ormond, 2 Apr. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns., v, p 295).

<sup>150</sup> Francis Gwyn to Ormond, 3 Apr 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 296-7).

<sup>151</sup> PRO PC 2/68, 471 (7 Apr. 1680).

<sup>152</sup> Jenkins to Sunderland, 7 May 1680 (*CSPD*, 1679-80, p. 467).

witnesses: John MacMoyer (another rogue priest from Armagh who, like his associate Murphy, had fallen foul of Oliver Plunkett), 'Callaghan',<sup>153</sup> and 'Henan' (aka Daniel Finan, another priest from Armagh), with Hetherington and 'Fitzgerald' in tow. They had been examined before the council, but had been unintelligible, and so were detained and kept separate from one another until their informations could be given in writing. Complementing this would be the personal testimonies of a number of figures in Ireland - Hans Hamilton, Richard Baker and Henry Baker, a lieutenant in the Irish army - as presented to the Privy Council.<sup>154</sup> But it remained the King's pleasure to keep the witnesses 'under restraint', until he himself was present in London, and at the council table to hear what they had to say.<sup>155</sup> Despite this attempt at secrecy, the allegations against Plunkett were noted in the Whig press, as was the fact that MacMoyer, Callaghan, and Finan were all examined on the word of Murphy, 'who is pretty well known (as they say) on the Irish roads'. It was also reported, correctly, that Hetherington had provided Shaftesbury with Murphy's allegations.<sup>156</sup>

Ormond soon received word that MacMoyer, Murphy, Callaghan and Finan, were to be sent back to Ireland to testify against Plunkett. Other matters that had arisen from the testimony related to John O'Moloney, the Catholic bishop of Killaloe, and Peter Creagh, the Catholic bishop of Cork and Cloyne, both of whom had come to official attention before, and both of whom were now to be arrested, having been accused of complicity in the plot. David Fitzgerald's testimony against Brittas and Piers Lacy ensured that new indictments would be brought, based on both the current and previous charges against them; it was reported in the press that Fitzgerald was travelling to Ireland to testify against them, and 'Popish recusants' were to be barred from the juries.<sup>157</sup> The testimonies being sent over to Ireland were to be augmented by additional material provided by Hans Hamilton and Henry Jones, the Anglican archbishop of Meath, *via* Essex, though the recovery of the King from illness boded well for his erstwhile supporters at a moment of potential uncertainty.<sup>158</sup> As for the

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<sup>153</sup> Two Catholic priests of this name appeared as witnesses at this time: Owen Callaghan and James Callaghan. It is unclear which is referred to here: William P. Burke, *The Irish priests in the penal times (1660-1760)* (Waterford, 1914), p. 81.

<sup>154</sup> Francis Gwyn to Ormond, 8 May 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p 314-5).

<sup>155</sup> Sunderland to Jenkins, 10 May 1680 (*CSPD, 1679-80*, pp 468-9).

<sup>156</sup> *The True News: or, Mercurius Anglicus*, 12-15 May 1680.

<sup>157</sup> Jenkins to Ormond, 14 May 1680 (*CSPD, 1679-80*, pp 478-9; PRO PC2/68/510-11); *London Gazette*, 13-7 May 1680.

<sup>158</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 15 May 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns., v, pp 316-7); Francis Gwyn to Ormond, 15 May 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 318-9).

witnesses themselves, 'the four that Atturbury brought hither yesterday began their journey for Ireland again', whilst Fitzgerald and Hetherington were dismissed, and David Fitzgerald, the principal accuser of Brittas and Lacy, was given his own leave to return to Ireland.<sup>159</sup> The assiduous pursuit of matters Irish was to take other forms. One minor incident, as reported in the official gazette, mentioned one 'John O'Cullen', an Irish priest apprehended en route to Ireland: 'It is left to the law to determine whether he be within the statute', though his acquittal was reported later.<sup>160</sup>

However, the English Privy Council were unimpressed by John Fitzgerald's credentials, and with what seemed to be outright falsehoods in what he had claimed. The abbey wall that had been central to his testimony proved a particular bone of contention, and 'the King jestingly says it was my Lord of Essex's and his plot'.<sup>161</sup> The eventual account published by (or on behalf of) John Fitzgerald contained little to bolster his allegations, or indeed to inspire confidence in them.<sup>162</sup> Ormond himself had been unimpressed with the various informers who had arrived in Ireland on 22 May to assist in Plunkett's prosecution. He was also uncertain as to how he should deal with them. If left at liberty, he suggested, they might be inclined to change their evidence against Plunkett 'who is reasonably well allied and friended in these parts'. He was especially wary of Edmund Murphy, 'who broke prison and is charged with a capital crime', but his scepticism was applied to the informers as a whole: 'nor have the rest the reputation of men of such tender consciences but that, without doing too much injury, it may be suspected they may hearken to an advantageous proposition from any hand'. David Fitzgerald was also now to be sent back to Ireland to participate in the case against Brittas, and a number of others were to be escorted back to Ireland that they might be examined before MacMoyer and Murphy. More positively, Peter Creagh was captured near Limerick, though 'Mullony, the titular bishop of Killaloe', was still at large.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Jenkins to Ormond, 15 May 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p 317).

<sup>160</sup> *London Gazette*, 20-4 May 1680; 17-21 June 1680.

<sup>161</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 21 May 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, 324).

<sup>162</sup> *The narrative of Mr John Fitzgerald, late of the order of St. Francis in the kingdom of Ireland* (London, 1681). The frontispiece of this work claimed that it contained 'several things relating to the Irish plot, managed by Plunkett'. However, the text itself dealt with ostensible attempts to undermine the credibility of Oates and Tonge in which at least one dubious Irishman was involved: but it made no reference to any 'Irish plot', or indeed to Fitzgerald's own attempts to provide evidence to prove its existence.

<sup>163</sup> Ormond to Jenkins, 23 May 1680 (*CSPD, 1679-80*, p 491; PRO SP63/339/88); PRO PC 2/68, 530-31 (26 May 1680).

However, cracks were starting to emerge between the various witnesses. John MacMoyer wrote to Hetherington to express his mounting dissatisfaction with him; for despite promises to MacMoyer and his associates, Hetherington was instead 'the greatest enemy [for] our persons that ever was hitherto in nature'. Whilst professing his loyalty to King and country, MacMoyer was concerned that he, along with Callaghan, Murphy and Finan, would themselves be prosecuted 'after this mans trial' (presumably a reference to Oliver Plunkett). He pleaded with Hetherington to obtain a general pardon for them, for if they were to be tried, by MacMoyer's own admission there would be no shortage of witnesses against them. He stated that Hans Hamilton had aided and protected him, and had passed his testimony on to Essex.<sup>164</sup> Yet the opinion of the Catholic hierarchy, who were kept informed of the unfolding developments for fear that they would be the prelude to further persecution, was that this plot in which they were supposedly involved did not actually exist.<sup>165</sup>

Despite this, it was obvious that the informers had influential and powerful friends, an inevitable consequence of their utility to the exclusion campaign. One was Henry Jones, the bishop of Meath, to whom Edmund Murphy had been recommended by 'that honourable lord and worthy patriot the earl of Shaftesbury'. Confusion over the precise status, if any, of the immunity accorded the witnesses in exchange for their testimonies seemed to have stemmed from some confusion over Murphy's own status. Despite this, Jones recommended Murphy to Colonel Roderick Mansell, an associate of Essex who had served under Granard in Ulster, and who had since become aligned with the Whigs. Jones suggested that Murphy's tale should be told to the King to ensure that he would receive a pardon, 'though let not my name be used'; Essex and Shaftesbury were to be prevailed upon if further assistance was required.<sup>166</sup> Mansell obliged; Hetherington was scheduled to appear before the Privy Council on 16 June, as movement on the pardons was expected.<sup>167</sup> Murphy was deemed by Jones to be in particular danger. While Jones preferred to remain in the shadows, he requested that Mansell press for a pardon for the informers. There was no news as yet of David Fitzgerald returning from Ireland.<sup>168</sup> Ormond was, however, instructed to protect

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<sup>164</sup> MacMoyer to Hetherington, 1 June 1680 (Bodl., Carte MS 39, f 140).

<sup>165</sup> 'News from Brussels', 8 June 1680 (*Nunziatura di Fiandri*, ii, 76).

<sup>166</sup> Jones to Mansell, 1 June 1680 (Bodl., Carte MS 39, ff 142-3).

<sup>167</sup> Mansell to Jones, 15 June 1680 (Bodl., Carte MS 39, ff 146-7).

<sup>168</sup> Jones to Mansell, 19 June 1680 (Bodl., Carte MS 39, ff 150-51)

Callaghan, Finan, MacMoyer, and Murphy.<sup>169</sup> Jones kept himself informed on events, informing Mansell in turn; he was well aware of the futility of trying Plunkett in Dundalk. He also provided Mansell with a copy of a letter MacMoyer wrote to Hetherington suggesting that Dundalk was too dangerous and intimidating a venue for the witnesses against Plunkett, and that his trial should be moved to Dublin instead.<sup>170</sup> The witnesses were apparently granted protection for the duration of Plunkett's trial, but there was no assurance of pardons thereafter, 'which I think was not intended but is so here confirmed, so as there may be in danger after to some of them...I reserve my writing to [my] lord the Earl of Shaftesbury until I may have something more for his lordship'.<sup>171</sup> Apart from his dealings with Murphy and Hetherington, by this time Jones had also been involved in the interrogation of the informer David Fitzgerald, and may have been involved in the investigation of the accusations against Tyrone.<sup>172</sup> However, as for Oliver Plunkett, the Privy Council finally agreed to have his trial moved to Dublin from Dundalk, given his 'great acquaintance and interest in that part of the country'.<sup>173</sup> The council also issued orders to find anyone who had assisted the elusive Captain Lavallyan, who had supposedly been in Ireland since the previous August.<sup>174</sup> Ormond duly acknowledged the receipt of the relevant witnesses against Plunkett, but the lack (as yet) of any direct testimony from David Fitzgerald seemed likely to cripple any prospective case in Limerick.<sup>175</sup>

Ossory also kept informed of events, describing Jones as 'not only a spiteful but a false informer' who was scheming with Mansell and Robert Ware. The latter was the son of the antiquary Sir James Ware. He was related to Jones by marriage, and had previously been responsible for publishing anti-Catholic propaganda; Boyle and Ormond subsequently suspected him of feeding allegations about a plot to Whig politicians in London. Ossory contradicted Jones' assertion that 'Murphy was prosecuted after he had accused [Henry] Baker and [Ensign] Smith', two of the soldiers who had arrested him; the opposite was true, and Jones apparently knew it.<sup>176</sup> The

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<sup>169</sup> PRO PC2/69, 22 (23 June 1680).

<sup>170</sup> Jones to Mansell, 3 July 1680 (Bodl., Carte MS 39, f 154v); MacMoyer to Hetherington, 2 July 1680 (Bodl., Carte MS 39, ff 154r-155).

<sup>171</sup> Jones to Mansell, 10 July 1680 (Bodl., Carte MS 243, f 477).

<sup>172</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 11 Nov. 1679 (V & A, F.47.A.40, f. 69). Copies of the various testimonies relating to the accusations against Tyrone are retained in Jones's papers: TCD MS 844, ff 233-8.

<sup>173</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 43 (21 July 1680).

<sup>174</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 44 (21 July 1680).

<sup>175</sup> Ormond to Jenkins, 16 June 1680 (*CSPD*, 1679-80, pp 516-7).

<sup>176</sup> Ossory to unknown, 20 July 1680 (Bodl., Carte MS 39, f. 164).

credibility of witnesses such as Murphy was to be maintained in the face of mounting evidence to the contrary. But the concerns of the witnesses about Plunkett's trial taking place in Dundalk, which was a 'great discouragement' to them, were taken into account: the English administration recommended that the trial take place before the court of Kings bench in Dublin, and Ormond was duly informed.<sup>177</sup>

However, the travails of Irish informers were not the only Irish issues to be considered in London. Bills for a proposed Irish parliament were finally en route to England for consideration, though some were described as merely 'transcripts of acts in force in England'; perhaps an indication of time being saved by the Irish government. But underlying the efforts made to get an Irish parliament in session was the more fundamental question of revenue. As it stood, the financial situation needed to be clarified in order to facilitate financial provisions for defence in any Irish parliament, for 'whosever understands the dangerous state of the kingdom, believes there was and is still a Popish Plot, or [really] fears a French invasion or a Popish rebellion or both, cannot be of opinion that it is fit to delay or frustrate the only means of preventing or repulsing those evils'.<sup>178</sup>

This line of argument was relevant to Whigs such as Shaftesbury, who had reportedly exclaimed 'does Ireland, the snake...think to give law to England? To give money to make the king independent of his people, to raise an army if they be so powerful! Its time for England to look about them, to make it a province'. Shaftesbury seemed to be extremely well informed about Ireland; dark hints were dropped in London about Strafford's fate (which was hardly an encouragement to Ireland), and the climate of fear at this time is suggested by a request that Longford burn his correspondence.<sup>179</sup> Yet events on the ground in Ireland, or the lack of them, seemed to contradict professed concerns about any Irish plot. But the confirmation of such fears was precisely the role to be played by the informers. Owen Callaghan also now testified about the alleged plot in Ireland in July 1680, and was ordered by the Privy Council to inform Ormond, who was waiting on instructions about how to deal with Patrick Lavallyan, and a number of senior Catholic clerics.<sup>180</sup> The Privy Council also ordered an investigation into a report that suspicious letters addressed to John Brennan, the

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<sup>177</sup> Francis Gwyn to Ormond, 24 July 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns., v, pp 352-3).

<sup>178</sup> Ormond to unknown, c. July 1680 (Bodl., Carte MS 146, pp 286-92).

<sup>179</sup> Netterville to Longford, c. July 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 350-51).

<sup>180</sup> Francis Gwyn to Ormond, 17 July 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 349-50).

Catholic bishop of Waterford from 'Ambrose Hara' (alias James Hackett) from St Malo had been intercepted at Cork; the link between them was to be investigated.<sup>181</sup>

Concerns about the impending danger Ireland was supposedly in were bound to prompt consideration of whether Ireland was in any position to defend itself; or indeed, such concerns could easily be manipulated by an Irish administration that had long bemoaned its inability to do so adequately. In July 1680 Arthur Forbes, now earl of Granard and marshal of the Irish army, arrived in London to report on a number of apparently important matters. His presence was requested at a meeting of Sunderland, Essex, Hyde and Sidney Godolphin, to discuss a report on the condition of Ireland that he had provided to the King, and to offer advice on it to Charles.<sup>182</sup> As presented by Granard, the Irish government's case was straightforward and unsurprising: Ireland was in no condition to withstand an invasion by anyone. Irish defences were in a bad condition: fortifications in particular were decayed, and munitions remained inadequate. The army itself was dilapidated and thereby weakened, and the payment of forces in Tangiers by the Irish exchequer was another drain of money that could be put to more immediate military purposes. On 3 July Charles had sought to add to this debt, directing that 500 foot (to be drawn from Irish and Scottish forces in Ireland), along with 120 horse troops, be sent to Kinsale, thence to the garrison at Tangiers.<sup>183</sup> It was perhaps significant, in the light of Granard's statement, that this deployment was now cancelled, and the troops were ordered back to their former postings in Ireland; stopgap it may have been, but it was something.<sup>184</sup> The need to guarantee Ireland's security had underpinned the continual demands for a parliament from the mid-1670s; but private interests (such as the financial undertaking of Richard Jones, earl of Ranelagh), tardiness and the Popish Plot had all intervened to prevent it. There was some optimism about the prospects for a parliament sitting in the near future, even if it was accepted that there would be major opposition to it in England should it sit.<sup>185</sup> But adjudication on the bills transmitted to London was continuing before the Committee for Irish Affairs, with the key bills barring Catholics from sitting in the parliament, and dealing

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<sup>181</sup> Order in Council, 29 July 1680 (*CSPD, 1679-80*, p 579). Brennan's predecessor in the diocese had been the vicar apostolic Patrick Hacket, appointed in April 1657. It is possible that this was the James Hackett referred to.

<sup>182</sup> Sunderland to Lord President of Council, 28 July 1680 (*CSPD, 1679-80*, p 577)

<sup>183</sup> King to Lord Lieutenant, 3 July 1680 (*CSPD, 1679-80*, p 538).

<sup>184</sup> Lords of Council to Lord Lieutenant, 13 Aug. 1680 (*CSPD, 1679-80*, p 603); PRO PC2/69, 69 (13 Aug 1680).

<sup>185</sup> 'Two papers brought by Lord Granard', 5 Aug. 1680 (*CSPD, 1679-80*, pp 589-91; PRO SP63/339/117-8).

with revenue being referred to the solicitor general.<sup>186</sup> Attempts were being made to deal with Irish affairs in London, albeit half-heartedly, but the looming spectre of the Irish plot seemed to overshadow more practical considerations. It was also ordered by the Privy Council that the original trial of Tyrone in Waterford be investigated to determine whether it had proceeded according to the law, especially with regard to the examinations subsequently provided.<sup>187</sup>

On 16 September, at least fourteen Irish witnesses, including priests, 'Burke' (presumably Hubert Boark) and 'MacNamara' (presumably John MacNamara), had arrived in London to swear to the existence of a plot. They claimed to be in fear of their lives, having supposedly been denied passports and money by Ormond, upon whom a fresh assault was apparently imminent by the 'fanatic party'. However Henry Jones, who bid them to secrecy 'lest it might turn to his prejudice', had surreptitiously provided them with money. Greeted in London by Titus Oates (and presented with shoes) they were directed to Shaftesbury, who was ill, and did not actually meet them. The moral character of these men was, however, questionable: horse thieves and Tories were noted amongst their midst.<sup>188</sup> Alongside this came yet another allegation of a plot, this time by an unspecified prisoner in Limerick whose questionable character was offset by the fact that his claims could be corroborated, and an investigation was ordered.<sup>189</sup> It was assumed to be the case that any alleged Irish plot would be dealt with immediately by the imminent English parliament, but pressure to do this in London would be eased if an Irish parliament met beforehand and did so. It would be assumed to be equally (if not more) zealous on the issue, and Ormond would be temporarily secure, for he could not be summoned to England in these circumstances.<sup>190</sup> He was ordered, in the meantime, to investigate further allegations against Tyrone, this time made by Nathaniel Crew, the bishop of Durham, and one 'Dalton'.<sup>191</sup> On 22 September the Privy Council instructed Ormond to secure Tyrone.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Francis Gwyn to Ormond, 10 Aug. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p 374).

<sup>187</sup> PRO PC2/69, 67 (12 Aug. 1680).

<sup>188</sup> Jenkins to Sidney Godolphin, 17 Sept. 1680 (*CSPD*, 1680-1, pp 23-4); Longford to Ormond, 18 Sept 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 427-32)

<sup>189</sup> Ormond to Jenkins, 18 Sept 1680 (*CSPD*, 1680-1, pp 25-6; PRO SP63/339/134)

<sup>190</sup> Jenkins to Godolphin, 29 Sept 1680 (*CSPD*, 1680-1, p 31)

<sup>191</sup> Sunderland to Ormond, 22 Sept 1680 (*CSPD*, 1680-1, p 36; PRO SP63/340/16)

<sup>192</sup> PRO PC2/69, 109 (22 Sept 1680).



Reports from Dublin suggested that few prominent Catholics remained there, having gone to either England or France in the previous twenty days.<sup>193</sup> Equally, Hubert Boark was reportedly ingratiated with Shaftesbury (who was prepared to assist them personally if no official aid was forthcoming), whilst Robert Fitzgerald and Henry Jones were alleged by some of the informers to have been the only members of the Irish council to offer any assistance to them.<sup>194</sup> Titus Oates himself now claimed that large numbers of Irish priests were in London: as many as eight hundred had allegedly arrived in recent months. So many were supposedly in St James Park, that 'Mr Oates thought himself in another country, but durst not walk there'. A new witness, one 'Burgh', had met Shaftesbury, who assured him of 'charity' from parliament if it was not forthcoming from the council. Certainly, the Irish witnesses seem to have been patronised – and as later events would suggest, manipulated – by elements of the Whig opposition. Collections for the other witnesses had been taken 'in a seditious coffeehouse and a conventicle. Hetherington has the guiding of them'.<sup>195</sup> Even Longford complained to Leoline Jenkins, Coventry's successor as secretary of state, about the supposed proliferation of Irish Catholics in the navy, and provided him with a list of suspects.<sup>196</sup> Following a decision of the Privy Council, Ormond was, in the meantime, compelled to provide guards, money, and 'all other necessary assistance' to the informer James Geogheghan, a defrocked Franciscan friar who intended to make further discoveries in Ireland; those they implicated were to be arrested and examined, and the testimonies were to be forwarded to London.<sup>197</sup> But the continued presence of 'Irish papists' in London attracted unfavourable notice, given they 'are as obnoxious in their very names here as once they were in Ireland and Paris'.<sup>198</sup>

The Privy Council finally resolved to order that Oliver Plunkett be sent to England for trial; he was *en route* to England by 17 October, and it was finally ordered on 27 October that he be tried in London.<sup>199</sup> But the impending English parliament

<sup>193</sup> Newsletter to Roger Garstell, 25 Sept. 1680 (*CSPD*, 1680-81, pp 39-40).

<sup>194</sup> Longford to Ormond, 28 Sept. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p 438).

<sup>195</sup> Jenkins to Godolphin, 28 Sept. 1680 (*CSPD*, 1680-1, pp 42-3).

<sup>196</sup> McDonnell, 'Irishmen in the Stuart navy', p. 87.

<sup>197</sup> Sunderland to Ormond, 6 Oct. 1680 (*CSPD*, 1680-1, p 54); PRO PC2/69, 117 (1 Oct. 1680). For Geogheghan see Burke, *Irish priests in the Penal times*, pp 71-3. There was also a 'Dalton' mentioned as a witness, but this also seems to have a pseudonym attributed to Geoghegan. It seems likely that these were the same individual, but this remains unresolved: 'Conspiracy in Ireland', 8 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Rep.* 11, app. 2, pp 146-7).

<sup>198</sup> 'Newsletter to Roger Garstell', 16 Oct. 1680 (*CSPD*, 1680-1, pp 61-2).

<sup>199</sup> Sunderland to Ormond, 6 Oct. 1680 (*CSPD*, 1680-1, p 54; PRO SP63/340/16); Ormond to Sunderland, 17 Oct. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 454-5); PRO PC2/69, 135 (27 Oct 1680).

ensured that the consideration of the bills for an Irish parliament was no longer a priority in London, as the visceral fear of Catholics assumed a primacy in public discourse.<sup>200</sup> ‘All the discourse in this country is concerning the plot and new discoveries often made’, noted Orrery’s son in Cork.<sup>201</sup> Rumours were abroad in London of ‘a great resort of Papists hither for France and Ireland’, which had prompted searches and arrests.<sup>202</sup> Indeed, on 25 October the lords would order the mass arrests of all Irishmen residing in London, Middlesex, Westminster and Southwark, with their names and details to be provided to the committee investigating the plot.<sup>203</sup> The alleged Irish plot could also be conjured in doggerel.

Great stores of wild Irish, both civil and wise,  
 Designed to join with the pilgrims of Spain,  
 Many thousands being ready all in good guise,  
 Had vow’d a long pilgrimage over the main,  
 To arm well this host,  
 When it came on our coast,  
 Black bills, forty thousand, are sent by the post,  
 This army lay privately on the sea-shore,  
 And no man e’er heard of them since or before<sup>204</sup>

A touch of scepticism seems evident in the last two lines, but the new session of the English parliament would see renewed concerns about Ireland and the Irish. On 26 October Sir Henry Capel claimed that ‘in Ireland, the Papists are at least five to one in number to the Protestants, and may probably derive from their cradle an inclination to massacre them again: at least the Protestants have no security, but by having the militia, arms, and the commands of towns and forts in their hands’. He also claimed that in 1672 the viceroy had been ordered to favour Catholics: a blatant distortion of the viceregal instruction, but as the viceroy had been Capel’s brother Arthur, earl of Essex, this could be seen as an attempt to absolve him from blame that might accrue.<sup>205</sup> New allegations also emerged of a plot to kill Shaftesbury and Oates, in which Ireland was mentioned. Consequently, Edmund Murphy, David Fitzgerald and Hetherington were empowered to bring over witnesses from Ireland as they saw fit, and the House of

<sup>200</sup> Jenkins to Ormond, 23 Oct. 1680 (*CSPD 1680-1*, p 68; PRO SP63/341/49).

<sup>201</sup> Orrery to Dowager Countess of Orrery, 22 Oct. 1680 (Edward MacLysaght (ed), *Calendar of the Orrery papers* (Dublin, 1941), p 237).

<sup>202</sup> Benson to Sir John Ellis, 19 Oct 1680 (BL Add MS 28,875, f 143).

<sup>203</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p 619.

<sup>204</sup> ‘A new narrative of the Popish Plot’ (1680) in Walter Scott (ed., *A collection of scarce and valuable tracts* (13 vols, London, 1809-15), viii, 63-64.

<sup>205</sup> *Parl. Hist.*, iv, col. 1166-7.

Lords demanded that Plunkett be despatched to England as soon as possible (though Charles sought to reassure them that he had in fact ordered this).<sup>206</sup> Likewise, after the evidence against Tyrone was examined and the lords had requested he be brought over, it was ordered that he was to be sent to England, along with copies of the evidence against him and accounts of his original trial.<sup>207</sup> On hearing from Sunderland of Plunkett's arrival in London, the lords ordered his incarceration in Newgate.<sup>208</sup> From Dublin, it was rumoured that Ormond ('the Duke') was to be summoned to England 'for having not countenanced the informers'.<sup>209</sup> Whether Irish matters would have come to the fore had the parliament been held the previous year is a moot point. By November it was obvious that there had been concerted efforts to foster the notion that there was indeed an Irish plot, and that there were witnesses to prove it. Having been nurtured and patronised up to this point, the imminent opening session of the English parliament would provide these informers with the necessary forum in which to reveal what they claimed to know.

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<sup>206</sup> Francis Gwyn to Ormond, 26 Oct 1680 (*H.M.C. Ormonde*, new ser., v, pp 460-1); PRO PC2/69, 135 (27 Oct 1680); *Lords jn.*, xiii, p 622.

<sup>207</sup> *Lord jn.*, xiii, p 626; PRO PC2/69, 136 (29 Oct 1680).

<sup>208</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p 629.

<sup>209</sup> Unknown to Sir John Ellis, 2 Nov 1680 (BL Add MS 28,875, f. 146).

## Chapter 2:

### Irish evidence, November 1680

The absence of an English parliament throughout most of 1680 had undoubtedly been problematic for the Whigs. Since the acquittal of Sir George Wakeman in July 1679 the plot had been in abeyance, and thus perhaps began to lose credibility: events such as the Meal Tub Plot, and the eventual trial of Stafford in December 1680, can be seen as attempts to maintain its momentum.<sup>210</sup> The promotion of the 'Irish plot' seems to have been in a similar vein, especially with the now rejuvenated exclusion proceedings in parliament.

'Some lewd Irish priests, and others of that nation, hearing that England was at that time disposed to hearken to good swearers, they thought themselves well qualified for the employment'.<sup>211</sup> Shaftesbury's promotion of the allegations of obscure and dubious Irishmen about the existence of an ongoing plot for a Catholic rebellion in Ireland eventually bore fruit in November 1680. In hindsight, Gilbert Burnet caustically described these Irish informers as 'brutal and profligate men: yet the earl of Shaftesbury cherished them much'; allegations of an Irish plot had been given credence, and 'upon that encouragement it was reckoned that we should have witnesses come over in whole companies'.<sup>212</sup> Indeed, since at least May 1679 Ormond's administration in Dublin had been providing financial maintenance to a large number of informers on the Irish revenue.<sup>213</sup> The precise extent of Shaftesbury's involvement with these witnesses remains unclear, but he certainly patronised them in England.<sup>214</sup> In November 1680 the English House of Lords became the forum for their allegations as Ireland's supposed role in the Popish Plot was revealed. Only a handful of the Irish informers who had come to light would actually provide testimony to parliament, but it would be appropriate to begin any discussion of those men, their claims and their characters at the point when those claims were officially revealed. On 4 November 1680 the second exclusion bill was passed in the House of Commons. As for the lords, on the same day

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<sup>210</sup> Miller, *Popery and politics in England*, pp 175-6.

<sup>211</sup> Burnet's *History of my own time*, ii, pp 291-2.

<sup>212</sup> Burnet's *History of my own time*, ii, p. 292.

<sup>213</sup> Hugh Fenning, 'Sir Cyril Wyche and the Popish Plot, 1678-80' in *Seanchas Ard Mhacha*, 19 (2003), pp 53-62.

<sup>214</sup> Haley, *Shaftesbury*, pp 569-72.

'the earl of Shaftesbury reported from the Committee for Examinations what their lordships thought was fit for the house to hear at the bar, concerning the conspiracy in Ireland; which his lordship divided into three parts'; the allegations directed at, respectively, Oliver Plunkett, Lord Brittas, and Tyrone.<sup>215</sup> Within the actual testimony as presented, it soon became apparent that these three elements could be readily construed as being fragments of a whole; and taken together they could easily seem to reflect and reveal the enormity of the supposed plot.

The first testimony heard by the lords was that of the priest Edmund Murphy,<sup>216</sup> who immediately launched into his allegations against Plunkett and hinted darkly that much more remained obscure, given that he had been subject to ill-treatment and discouragement from unspecified figures in high places, 'which, for what I know, hath proved a fatal example to some that would have given in such testimonies as might have concerned to the well being of the three kingdoms in future ages'.<sup>217</sup> He had apparently returned to Ireland in 1673 after a sojourn in Spain, and claimed to have been offered the post of chanter of the diocese of Armagh by Oliver Plunkett in the latter's capacity as archbishop (Plunkett later denied this). In his ostensible new role, Murphy was enjoined to excommunicate a number of dissident priests. He had succeeded one James Callaghan as chanter; the latter had been excommunicated by Plunkett, and would supposedly seek revenge on Murphy later by trying to obtain a warrant for his arrest from Hans Hamilton. In the meantime Plunkett apparently maintained a correspondence with the continent; for a Catholic prelate in Ireland this was simply a standard and unavoidable operating procedure, but it illustrates how very different constructions could be placed upon facts that were, in themselves, relatively innocuous. In this case, Plunkett's correspondence with Europe was ostensibly part of ongoing preparations for a rebellion. He had supposedly inquired amongst the clergy and nobility of south Ulster and north Leinster about the manpower available there to facilitate and assist a French invasion of Ireland, and supposedly compiled a list of 5-6,000 men throughout his diocese who could serve in this capacity. Plunkett was, at this time, undoubtedly hostile to certain priests in his diocese. One of these was John MacMoyer, a Franciscan from Armagh and associate of Murphy (he had been curate of

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<sup>215</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 633. .

<sup>216</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, pp 634-8.

<sup>217</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 634.

the same parish) who was preaching against the Catholic hierarchy of which Plunkett was a member, and who previously accused Plunkett of complicity in a plan for a rebellion in 1676, apparently to forestall an impending prosecution for supplying ammunition to Tories.<sup>218</sup> He had become alienated from Plunkett due to his excessive drinking, Tory connections, and his support for the friar Anthony Daly against Plunkett; the latter had thus suspended him from his duties. Plunkett himself found witnesses to discredit both James Callaghan and MacMoyer. These allegations were, however, dismissed by Hamilton, who warned that Callaghan should be left alone.

After this, Plunkett sought out another cleric, Patrick Tyrell (the incumbent bishop of Clogher), who, in order to quell dissent within the diocese and bolster Plunkett's authority, claimed that 'the king of England's authority was annexed to the Popes bull'; an obscure assertion that nonetheless carried the insinuation that the king was somehow involved in this plot, and was perhaps reminiscent of the allegations that Charles I had given his imprimatur to the 1641 rebellion.<sup>219</sup> Both men then told Murphy that 'there was a thing on foot, that would root out heresy out of the kingdom', or more specifically, 'the Protestant religion'.<sup>220</sup> Plunkett was apparently in receipt of an allowance from Ormond, and claimed that he could prevail on the viceroy to call off Hamilton should this be required. According to Murphy, these events took place in and around 1676, and the preparations for rebellion continued. Plunkett allegedly had 7,000 men ready to assist the prospective French invasion, whose ultimate purpose was to benefit the duke of York. Another priest, Ronan Maginn (one-time vicar apostolic of Dromore), confided in Murphy 'that the Primate would bring in the French to no other end but to murder all the Protestants in one week'.<sup>221</sup> After this, Murphy resolved to help Maginn uncover the plot, but in the meantime he was prevailed upon by Plunkett to give evidence to Ormond against Maginn, MacMoyer, and another cleric, Anthony Daly; the latter's difficulties with Plunkett had actually seen him attempt to have the primate assassinated.<sup>222</sup> Plunkett allegedly recruited Tories and various other disaffected characters to his banner, from both Leinster and Ulster, and instructed those

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<sup>218</sup> For MacMoyer's career see Ó Fiaich, 'The fall and return of John MacMoyer'. For his previous allegations against Plunkett see *HMC Rep. 6, app.*, p. 744.

<sup>219</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 635. On the suggestions of Charles I's alleged involvement in the rebellion see Michael Perceval-Maxwell, *The Outbreak of the Irish Rebellion of 1641* (Dublin, 1994), pp 218-9; Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650* (Oxford, 2001), pp 517-8.

<sup>220</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 635.

<sup>221</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 635.

<sup>222</sup> John J. Hanly, 'Saint Oliver Plunkett 1625-1681' in Hughes & Nolan (eds), *Armagh: History & Society*, p. 449.

of them who had been dispossessed of their estates to go to France. One such was Patrick Fleming, 'the chiefest rebel in Ireland'.<sup>223</sup> By August 1678 Murphy and Maginn resolved to inform Hamilton of this plot, but they soon fell foul of Lieutenant Henry Baker, who was also apparently implicated. Maginn went to France soon after the proclamation for banishing Catholic clergy had been issued. Having sought, as Murphy claimed, to infiltrate this plot, he was allegedly poisoned in Flanders. Murphy went so far as to suggest that the proclamation had actually been intended to get himself and Maginn out of the way. He then sought to inform Hamilton of the activities of Baker and one Ensign Smith, who he claimed had provided weapons to the Tories and information to the priests. Baker then sought to discredit Murphy, who was eventually imprisoned. While incarcerated, he came into contact with William Hetherington, 'a person [imbued] with a most heroic and excellent disposition, and very zealous for the Protestant religion'.<sup>224</sup> Murphy claimed, when asked, that Ormond and some unspecified others had sought to obstruct him.

After Murphy had finished, Plunkett himself was brought to the bar, and questioned about Murphy, stating when asked that he did 'know him too well'.<sup>225</sup> He admitted to corresponding with the Tory Patrick Fleming: Plunkett was sympathetic to the plight of many dispossessed Irish who had become Tories, and had been actively seeking to obtain safe passage for Fleming from Ireland (at Fleming's request) at the time of the latter's death.<sup>226</sup> But he denied any involvement in any plot, and the receipt of any financial backing from Ormond. Murphy then swore to the truth of his own statement, and claimed that in December 1679 Ormond had demanded from him an account of Tory activity. He also claimed to have been delayed and obstructed in Dublin (prospective witnesses were supposedly shipped to Jamaica). He stated that one Colonel Laurence imprisoned him after Hans 'Hambleton' (presumably Hamilton) refused to provide him with safe conducts for witnesses. When he had sought to testify to the existence of the plot, he had found himself imprisoned in Dundalk on charges up to and including murder. He also claimed that the Irish council had disregarded his claims; indeed, that Sir John Davys, one of the clerks of the Irish Privy Council, had

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<sup>223</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 636.

<sup>224</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 637.

<sup>225</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 638.

<sup>226</sup> P.G. Murray, 'A previously unnoticed letter of Oliver Plunkett', *Seanchas Ard Mhacha*, 8 (1975-6), pp 23-33.

openly dismissed them. In all, a sinister construction could be put on events that were, on their own terms, open to a number of explanations.<sup>227</sup>

The second testimony to be presented on 4 November was that of Hubert Boark, which was divided into two parts. In his first statement, he claimed that in late October 1677 he was in Waterford with Tyrone and his steward Thomas Samson, and Tyrone apparently said that 'parlez vous Francais will be plentifully heard here ere long'.<sup>228</sup> Tyrone then revealed French plans 'to subdue both England and Ireland', and offered to get Boark his estate back (which he admitted he wanted back) if he would become involved. Boark refused, and Tyrone threatened to kill him, but the fortuitous arrival of a passer-by saved him. Instead, one John Daniell, whom Boark had previously assaulted, was co-opted to swear against him. This allegation had its basis in fact: in March 1679 Boark had claimed that Tyrone was a former employer, and had sought to silence him by framing him for an assault on Daniell.<sup>229</sup> Tyrone, on the other hand, had stated at the same time that the assault had taken place and that this was why Boark was imprisoned: a more prosaic assertion. He also denied ever employing Boark.<sup>230</sup> In his account as presented to parliament Boark stated that he had been imprisoned in Waterford until 14 March 1678. Tyrone apparently ensured that bail was denied, stating that he wished to see Boark hung. Boark petitioned Ormond for redress, but the petition, mysteriously, never arrived.

In his second statement he told how he had been summoned before Ormond and the Irish council.<sup>231</sup> Tyrone had apparently sought to discredit his testimony by accusing him of numerous crimes, most especially horse stealing. At the next Waterford assizes Boark was intimidated from testifying against Tyrone, and was further discouraged by the absence of witnesses, such as Thomas Samson and John MacNamara, who could supposedly corroborate his story. He escaped and went on the run, refusing to believe assurances from Tyrone that no harm would come to him and refusing inducements not to testify against him. He implicated numerous other individuals in the process of recounting his subsequent adventures. He had sought to escape to England, but Tyrone prevailed on Ormond to prevent this. Boark then attempted to contact Orrery, so that Samson could be examined, but was captured by

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<sup>227</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, pp 642-3.

<sup>228</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 638.

<sup>229</sup> 'Examination of Hubert Boark', 18 Mar. 1679 (BL, Add MS 37,772, f.5).

<sup>230</sup> 'Examination of Rt. Hon. Richard, earl of Tyrone', 20 Mar. 1679 (BL Add MS 37,772, f.6).

<sup>231</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, pp 639-41.



Tyrone's men at John MacNamara's house. Taken back to Tyrone's house, it had seemed that Boark's fate was sealed. Like Murphy, Boark also implicated Sir John Davys, alleging that he refused to believe his claims. He also claimed that John Keating, the incumbent chief justice of the Common Pleas in Ireland, had assisted Tyrone (Keating had apparently presided over the two assize hearings against Tyrone that had seen the proceedings against him dismissed).<sup>232</sup> However, Boark somehow survived to recount his tale in London.

6 November saw the largest number of witness testimonies being presented to the lords. The first was that of Thomas Samson himself.<sup>233</sup> He stated that Tyrone had in fact been found guilty of high treason by a grand jury in Waterford in 1679, but that the incriminating testimony was deemed invalid for no good reason: the evidence was supposedly suppressed. He claimed, furthermore, that he had told Sir John Davys to search Tyrone's house for correspondence, especially with 'Doctor Fogarty' (presumably the same Fogarty who had been mentioned in Oates's original allegations), but that this was never done.

John MacNamara's statement followed on the same day. He claimed to have been sworn into the conspiracy spearheaded by Tyrone in 1677 by William Bradley, a justice of the peace in Waterford who supposedly had a commission from the French (via Tyrone) to be a Colonel of Horse in the county, and who offered a commission to MacNamara to participate in the proposed uprising.<sup>234</sup> In a subsequent encounter with Tyrone, MacNamara claimed to have seen a list of names of those involved: Brittas, David Fitzgerald, John Fitzgerald and Pierce Lacy were all implicated. The list mentioned figures in Waterford, Cork, Kerry, Clare and Limerick. He claimed that the names he saw were of those who would be tasked with raising the rebel forces in the event of the French invasion, in which case there was a plan to capture and hold Limerick. Tyrone intimated to him there they may have been a personal motive for his involvement in the plot: 'tis the providence of God, to bring some downfall on that unjust King, the duke of Ormond and his children, that wronged me in so high a nature on the account of Villiers'.<sup>235</sup> A report had been drawn up in late March 1680 on a

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<sup>232</sup> F.E. Ball, *The Judges in Ireland, 1221-1921* (2 vols, London, 1926), ii, p 290.

<sup>233</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 644.

<sup>234</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, pp 644-7.

<sup>235</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 645.

petition of 'Edward Villiers alias Fitzgerald' of 'Dromany', Waterford, alleging that Tyrone, who was previously his wife's guardian, had swindled him out of his estates.<sup>236</sup>

MacNamara subsequently claimed to have been involved in attempts to buy Hubert Boark's silence, and to induce him to swear that 'Villiers', 'Bradley' and one 'Captain Nicholas' had in turn induced Boark to swear against Tyrone. Boark refused to comply, and Ormond intervened at Tyrone's behest, summoning Boark to Dublin. MacNamara himself was eventually imprisoned, and confessed the truth. This did not end his clotted and convoluted account; he also claimed that in 1676 he had attended unusually large meetings of the clergy in Waterford, being informed that a French invasion was imminent, and would result in the restoration of the Irish to their lands. 'The duke of York gives full consent, and is of our side, with the assistance of the earl of Anglesey', amongst other persons of quality: a surprising assertion.<sup>237</sup> He bolstered this latter claim by stating that in October 1679, at the time when he was involved in pressurising Boark, Tyrone himself had confirmed this.

MacNamara's testimony was followed by that of Eustace Comyn.<sup>238</sup> Comyn claimed that, while living in Tipperary, he had witnessed mercantile traffic to France that saw large sums of money being brought back to Ireland, to be distributed by one Keadagh Meagher, who had been appointed by Plunkett and Brennan to distribute monies in Ireland for the the planned rebellion. These sums were distributed widely amongst notable figures in the county, some of whom had uncomfortably close links to Ormond; for example, his nephew, Walter Butler, who supposedly gave refuge to Oliver Plunkett in his home. Subsequently, there were attempts to murder Comyn, and Ormond refused to grant Comyn protection, compelling him to abscond to Ulster. He was subsequently imprisoned in Carrickfergus, Trim, Dublin and Limerick (where he claimed to have been incarcerated for eight months), but eventually found himself in a position to give evidence about the existence of the plot. Keadagh Meagher was, however, murdered by Catholics for allegedly becoming aware of the same plot. The fact that he was supposedly murdered for discovering something that he was involved in anyway was indicative of the convoluted and garbled claims of these allegations.

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<sup>236</sup> Report on petition of John Fitzgerald, 31 Mar. 1680 (*CSPD, 1679-80*, p. 427).

<sup>237</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 647.

<sup>238</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, pp 647-8.

When questioned afterwards, Comyn confirmed that Tyrone had told him that the plan was intended 'to bring in the French'.<sup>239</sup>

Finally, and again on 6 November, there was David Fitzgerald.<sup>240</sup> He told of a plan for an uprising, to be orchestrated by John Moloney, the Catholic bishop of Killaloe, who had been given £100,000 for the purpose. This plan was of long gestation; it had apparently been planned since the aftermath of the Act of Settlement of 1662; evidently, the restoration of the Irish to their estates was a consideration in the plan, a claim that resembled Tyrone's supposed promise to Boark. In 1673-4 'MacNamara, Lacy, O'Neale' had all come from France to Ireland, ostensibly to raise recruits for the French army. Irish troops were being surreptitiously recruited at this time for service in the French army, and claims that soldiers were moving between Ireland and the continent resembled similar events prior to the outbreak of the 1641 rebellion.<sup>241</sup> However, Fitzgerald was told by Lacy that the real purpose of this activity was to enable the Irish 'to assert their liberty, and regain their rights',<sup>242</sup> though he was apparently wary of revealing too much. Lacy engaged in similar activities in 1675, and soldiers were supposedly being raised throughout Ireland. In 1676 the bishop of Cork had supposedly claimed that the Pope had released Catholics in Ireland from their obligation to the king; the Catholic archbishop of Tuam, James Lynch, was now supposedly orchestrating the plans for the rebellion. The general purpose was to ensure that York would become king by 1678, but 'a difference between the king and parliament'<sup>243</sup> was essential to the success of this plan, and would, of necessity, be carefully fostered: such a reference would have had considerable relevance in the midst of the Exclusion Crisis. In May 1678 Lacy was involved in meetings with Richard Talbot as the preparations continued, and by now a 'Dr Hetherman' was also involved. November 1678 was apparently the time specified for the French invasion, with Kerry deemed to be the ideal place for the landing to take place; it was to be assisted by risings in key locations. Protestants were to be massacred, and again, Limerick was to be captured. Given that similar claims had been published in 1679, such consistency

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<sup>239</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 648.

<sup>240</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, pp 650-52.

<sup>241</sup> Essex to Ranelagh, 7 Apr. 1675 (*Essex Papers*, i, p. 313); Perceval-Maxwell, *Outbreak of the Irish Rebellion of 1641*, p. 205-6.

<sup>242</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 650.

<sup>243</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 651.

could easily suggest plausibility.<sup>244</sup> However, no action was to take place until the French actually landed; they were to be the catalyst. Fitzgerald also implicated Sir Thomas Southwell, whom he claimed was obstructing the discovery of the plot, and was corresponding with the plotters. And on that note, the first presentations of the Irish witnesses came to an end.

Taken collectively, the convoluted claims of these witnesses seemed to point to a bigger picture. The recurrent cross-referencing, the implications, the reiterating of salient points that were either similar or the same; logically, it sounded as if there was a plot, and these witnesses were aware of at least some elements of it. That the ostensible plot was intended to facilitate the outbreak of a rebellion in Ireland was in itself a plausible claim, for given the levels of violence in early modern Ireland, it was understandable that it could be seen by some to retain a potential for more. Given that the witnesses had testified to the lords in an environment of visceral anti-Catholicism, such claims about Ireland were bound to be of some relevance to an English audience; for while England itself lacked an appropriate model for what Catholic rebellion or invasion might actually entail, Ireland could provide one.

For a variety of reasons (not least the lapse of licensing laws) the period of the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis saw an explosion in the production of pamphlets, newsbooks, and printed ephemera in England. In a way, this mirrored the huge upsurge in print production of a similar nature that had accompanied the crisis of the early 1640s. A more specific parallel, however, is the fact that, as in the 1640s, at least some of this printed material between 1678 and 1681 concerned itself with Ireland and the Irish, and more particularly, with the inherent dangers of both. Such material took various forms, one of which was simply the subsequent publication of the claims of these informers, whether as verbatim accounts of the testimonies presented to the houses of parliament or as more substantial versions of them. The Popish Plot was significant in that the proliferation of printed material enabled the formulation, in both style and substance, of the broad genre of the 'narrative', defined by Harold Love as 'an extended account of a series of events given by an actor or intimate witness'.<sup>245</sup> The

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<sup>244</sup> *A full and true relation of a new hellish Popish Plot in Ireland, carried on by the Papists in the province of Munster* (London, 1679).

<sup>245</sup> Harold Love, 'The look of news: Popish Plot narratives, 1678-80' in John Barnard & D.F. McKenzies (eds) with Maureen Bell, *The Cambridge history of the Book in Britain, vol iv: 1557-1695* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 653.

rhetorical strategy of mediation was traditionally employed in printed news. But the various Popish Plot narratives 'represent a brilliant attempt to hijack what was at the time accepted as a news medium in order to make it a vehicle of malicious untruth'.<sup>246</sup>

Some of these pamphlets were official publications. Sympathetic individuals probably funded others. The miscellaneous jumble of allegations found their way into print quite rapidly, and indeed, some of the printed versions expanded greatly upon the sworn depositions. Irrespective of their details, the Irish narratives remained consistent within certain limits, and at a more general level a pattern could be discerned from their broad similarities. The salient elements of this pattern were quite straightforward, and perhaps the more plausible on this account: the existence of a long-standing plot for an Irish rebellion involving the Catholic gentry and clergy, and bolstered by a French invasion. The ultimate purpose was the destruction of the Protestant religion; the inducement was the restoration of the Irish to the lands lost in the 1650s and 1660s.

Such consistency was perhaps understandable, given what seemed to be the orchestrated nature of their patronage by Shaftesbury (later events would give credence to this). While it remains unclear whether he himself had suborned witnesses, other figures such as William Hetherington were later accused of doing precisely that. Yet the similarities may also derive from the fact that the testimonies were, to a certain degree, simply reflecting long-standing if inchoate perceptions, and they readily fitted into the mesh of uncertain beliefs and expectations about the Irish at this time. The accounts were quite restrained, yet were detailed and intricate, if contradictory and complicated. They were often driven by the narrative hook of the author's own travails; many of them claimed to have been threatened and persecuted, a situation exacerbated by the fact that, for some, the alleged plot seemed to penetrate to the highest levels of the Irish government. To English audiences at this juncture, such fears were ultimately (though not exclusively) of French power.<sup>247</sup> Ireland retained a visceral power in such a context. Gilbert Burnet recalled that the allegations of the informer Stephen Dugdale in February 1679, which amongst other things referred to a planned massacre of Protestants, had carried a particular resonance, for 'the memory of the Irish massacre was yet so fresh, as [to] raise a particular horror at the very mention of this'.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Love, 'The look of news', p. 655.

<sup>247</sup> J.F. Bosher, 'The Franco-Catholic Danger, 1660-1715', *History*, 79 (1994), 5-30; Harris, *Restoration*, pp 164-5.

<sup>248</sup> Burnet's *History of my own time*, ii, p. 195.

In form if not quite substance, the narratives of the Irish witnesses would become part of a particular genre of pamphlet at this time, and to make sense of their nature, it is worth glancing forward in time to the points when the testimonies actually became printed, and thus public. Derived from oral testimony, these would be compelling accounts to read or hear aloud. Yet they did not necessarily spell out the implications of the plot's success. Regardless of the ultimate purpose, the immediate and most fearful consequences remain unclear in many. However, one was quite blunt: 'the Popish Irish were in an expecting readiness to give the blow, and act over their butcheries of '41, but with greater barbarity'.<sup>249</sup> The fear that Irish Catholics would seek to wipe out the Protestant settlers whom they vastly outnumbered did not just draw credence from the notion that Catholics were duty bound to wipe out heretics. It also drew strength from the tangible reality that the Catholic Irish might attempt to get back the lands they had so recently lost. This was the context into which the informer's claims would fit, and by the end of 1680, their testimony stood at the intersection of a number of unresolved questions. It is worth looking at the informers and their claims in their totality.

Edmund Murphy had been the parish priest of Killeavy in county Armagh, and his clerical career was chequered: in 1674 Oliver Plunkett suspended him from his duties for drunken behaviour, and questionable dealings with Tories. From early 1680 Murphy, with William Hetherington, had become involved in Shaftesbury's attempts to promote an Irish plot, testifying as he did to its existence. But when Murphy had been examined in London before the English Privy Council in May 1680 he claimed to be unaware of any plot then in progress. He was sent back to Ireland along with some of the other witnesses, and was maintained by the government in Dublin. Murphy was subsequently recommended to Henry Jones, who sought a pardon for him, and he subsequently accompanied Hetherington to Ulster to obtain more evidence. However, when Plunkett's first trial opened in Dundalk in July 1680 Murphy refused to testify and absconded to England. He was apparently afraid of arrest or retribution; and as other witnesses now refused to testify, Plunkett's trial collapsed.

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<sup>249</sup> Carrol, *A narrative of the Popish Plot in Ireland*, A 3.

But in January 1681 Murphy assented to the publication of *The present state and condition of Ireland*.<sup>250</sup> On the face of it, this was only one of a number of testimonies published as pamphlets at this time, offering accounts of the ostensible Catholic plotting in Ireland that was supposedly the prelude to rebellion. But Murphy's was unusual because it did not actually do this. What it provided instead was a detailed and intricate account of his activities in Armagh, in circumstances that remained incidental in many ways to claims about an impending Irish rebellion. Armagh was traditionally a border zone between Leinster and Ulster, and the county had been heavily settled under the Ulster Plantation; by 1641 native Irish landowners retained perhaps 24% of land in the county. The remainder was split between the Church of Ireland, Trinity College Dublin, and a variety of Old English families and newer British settlers. The remnant retained in Irish hands was mainly in the baronies of Orier and the Fews in south Armagh. Yet while the native landowning classes had been supplanted, they remained *in situ*, and by the second half of the seventeenth century Armagh was problematic. Economically stagnant with a low population, often impassable geography and a fragmented society, it retained an uneasy balance between natives and newcomers, and was subject to neither's law. Such a situation would inevitably breed and facilitate lawlessness; it bred and facilitated Tories.<sup>251</sup>

The Tory was an inevitable by-product of the disruptive events of the seventeenth century in Ireland, and Tories were notably prevalent in Armagh.<sup>252</sup> Murphy's pamphlet was primarily concerned with Tory activity in Armagh and Louth and the collusion of English military personnel in those activities. It focused on the notorious Armagh Tory Redmond O'Hanlon and dealt with Plunkett indirectly. But it provided a notable account of events in Armagh in the late 1670s. As Murphy's own testimony it was inevitably shaped by self-interest (incriminating material was excluded), but in recounting the events he had been involved in, whether as priest, criminal or ostensibly concerned subject, he offered a testimony that connected the exalted realms of alleged international plotting with the reality of life on the ground in

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<sup>250</sup> *The present state and condition of Ireland, but more especially the province of Ulster, humbly represented to the Kingdom of England by Edmund Murphy* (London, 1681).

<sup>251</sup> Raymond Gillespie, 'The transformation of the borderlands, 1600-1700' in Raymond Gillespie & Harold O'Sullivan (eds) *The Borderlands* (Belfast, 1989), pp 75-92; Harold O'Sullivan, 'Land confiscation and plantation in County Armagh during the English Commonwealth and Restoration periods, 1650 to 1680' in Hughes & Nolan (eds), *Armagh*, pp 333-380.

<sup>252</sup> Éamonn Ó Ciardha, 'Toryism and Rappareeism in County Armagh in the late seventeenth century' in Hughes & Nolan (eds), *Armagh*, pp 381-412.

the Armagh of the late 1670s. Murphy's was the worms-eye view. And he began with Redmond O'Hanlon.<sup>253</sup>

Originally from Poyntzpass, O'Hanlon had come to prominence as a dangerous and elusive Tory leader in Armagh and Louth in the 1670s. Murphy claimed to be concerned that his parish suffered from the depredations of O'Hanlon and his gang, and so he had preached against them. In response, O'Hanlon threatened to levy fines of, respectively, one cow, two cows and death upon anyone attending Murphy's sermons; Murphy himself fled the parish after O'Hanlon murdered a parishioner, hiring a curate to preach in his place. At this point, Cormucke Raver O'Murphy emerged. A thief and former herdsman to one Lieutenant Henry Baker, he had joined O'Hanlon's gang and was active in September 1678, when Murphy, given his parishioners fears, sought out Baker to deal with the problem. The latter proved reluctant to do this, and the reason soon became clear: collusion. Murphy's suspicions were initially aroused by the fact that Baker was godfather to a proclaimed Tory's child, and final proof came when Murphy's brother Phelemy encountered Baker and Cormucke Raver drinking together and wrestling in a quarry.

Eventually, however, Cormucke Raver split from O'Hanlon, and a feud emerged between the two. Consequently, one Capt. William Butler sought Murphy's assistance in dealing with O'Hanlon, and both settled upon Cormucke Raver as the instrument. Cormucke remained wary, claiming that O'Hanlon had extensive contacts amongst both the army and the Catholic clergy, but eventually relented, and an elaborate scheme to ambush O'Hanlon was devised. But this was hampered in suspicious circumstances and Murphy, who was shuttling between the various parties, was accused of becoming a Tory hunter; being in imminent danger he absconded to Dundalk. Further escapades ensued, until Cormucke Raver was shot by one of his own associates. Murphy continued his campaign against O'Hanlon, attempting to recruit Cormucke's disgruntled family to his cause, but was eventually arrested for his troubles, being accused by another soldier, Ensign John Smith, of seeking to murder him (Smith was himself accused by Murphy of colluding with O'Hanlon). Eventually released from prison, Murphy involved himself again in the rapidly escalating intrigues aimed at capturing O'Hanlon and his band. By October 1679 events were moving towards some kind of resolution, but soon he was imprisoned again, supposedly in a

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<sup>253</sup> The following paragraphs summarise the account provided in *The present state and condition of Ireland*.



trumped up charge. He narrowly escaped execution, and learnt that he had been excommunicated by Plunkett; his accusers were supposedly in league with Plunkett 'to carry on the plot by means of the Tories', having permitted 'Plunkett's provincial council for the destruction of all the Protestants'.<sup>254</sup> This was Plunkett's first appearance in an account that was meant to specifically target him.

As for Murphy, imprisoned without bail, he managed to give his account to Hetherington who, furnished with this testimony, sought to disclose the as yet unspecified plot. And from here Murphy's account, while recounting the further adventures of its protagonists, substantively petered out.

Murphy provided a deeply partisan view of society in Armagh at this time, and shed indirect light upon numerous topics: the moral economy imposed by figures such as O'Hanlon, the society of the area, and the practical reality of how military operations and political authority actually operated on the ground. Murphy, unusually in English, offered a view of Tory activity and its backdrop by one intimately involved in it. What he excluded was, of course, equally suggestive: his own criminal past, and the awkward local rumour that he himself had killed Cormucke Raver O'Murphy.<sup>255</sup> And the emphasis on the supposed existence of an Irish Catholic plot ignored the continual (and more real) fears of unrest among Scottish Presbyterians in Ulster that so preoccupied governments in Dublin. Yet the fact that this testimony became relevant at this juncture is suggestive of the fears of Catholics in general, and Irish Catholics in particular, that the Popish Plot tapped into. This was the context, into which Murphy's claims would fit, and by the end of the 1670s, he stood at the intersection of a number of outstanding issues; otherwise, why would the account of an informer about bandits in a relatively obscure part of Ireland be relevant to anyone at this time? To ask this is to ask why Ireland would be relevant. The enduring fear of a re-run of 1641 and its accompanying massacres was obvious, and remained widespread in Ireland among those who had most to fear from it: Protestant settlers (indeed, Armagh had been the scene of some of the most notorious events of that rebellion). From an English perspective, such a rebellion could be transferred across the Irish Sea with fearful consequences. Tories in Ireland were another factor in such fears, as they had relevance at this time far beyond banditry. The term was synonymous with dispossession and the Catholic Irish, and it

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<sup>254</sup> *The present state and condition of Ireland*, p 26.

<sup>255</sup> P.F. Moran, *Memoirs of the most Rev. Oliver Plunkett* (Dublin, 1861), p. 302; Alice Curtayne, *The trial of Oliver Plunkett* (New York, 1953), p. 121.

was a phenomenon that had attracted the reforming zeal of Plunkett after his appointment to Armagh. His Meath background did not endear him to Armagh's clerics ('Meathmen without exception are not suitable as preachers of the word of God'),<sup>256</sup> but the travails of the dispossessed in his diocese that had become Tories caught both his attention and his sympathy. Acutely aware of their situation, their depredations among the peasantry, and of the retaliation against the Irish that would inevitably follow their actions, he made himself available as an intermediary between the Dublin government (particularly under Lord Berkeley) to deal with Tories (such as Patrick Fleming) in exchange for a measure of *de facto* religious toleration. He subsequently got a number of Tories to leave Ireland, and continued to do so; for Plunkett, Tories would remain a preoccupation.<sup>257</sup>

But Tory activity could be construed as an integral part of any attempt to orchestrate a rebellion; witness testimonies and allegations about supposed Irish plots often directly linked them to Tories. Murphy's testimony differed from his pamphlet; he claimed then that Plunkett sought 'to bring in the French to no other end but to murder all the Protestants in one week',<sup>258</sup> and had supposedly sought to recruit Tories to his cause, encouraging them to go to France to seek redress for their dispossession. Murphy had almost certainly seen an opportunity to save himself as the nascent Whig opposition in England sought Irish witnesses. Amongst those whom Murphy had implicated were the two soldiers who had imprisoned him in 1679, which suggested an element of revenge that may also have extended to Plunkett, though he would eventually decline to repeat his allegations at Plunkett's trial the following year. However, a postscript to these claims may be seen in the fact that from early 1681 the word 'Tory' would begin its long journey through English political history, starting as a term of abuse directed at supporters of the ostensibly pro-Catholic court.<sup>259</sup>

The various allegations made by Hubert Boark, John MacNamara and Eustace Comyn were linked by the fact that they were directed at the earl of Tyrone, and they would also be printed. Tyrone and William Bradley had originally been indicted for high-treason at the Waterford assizes on 11 March 1680, and Brittas, Pierce Lacy, and

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<sup>256</sup> Cited in John J. Hanly, 'Saint Oliver Plunkett 1625-1681' in Hughes & Nolan (eds), *Armagh*, p. 421.

<sup>257</sup> Donnchadh MacPhóil, 'Blessed Oliver Plunkett and the Tories', *Seanchas Ard Mhacha*, 3 (1959), pp 251-60; P.G. Murray, 'A previously unnoticed letter of Oliver Plunkett'.

<sup>258</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p 635.

<sup>259</sup> Robert Willman, 'The origins of 'Whig' and 'Tory' in English political language', *Historical Journal*, 22 (1974), pp 247-64.

various other figures from both Waterford and Limerick were implicated in this 'conspiracy' at this time.<sup>260</sup> But despite the prominence later accorded to these allegations in London, they had been dismissed in Ireland.

Of the informers who testified before parliament in November 1680, these three remain the most obscure. Hubert Boark's account claimed that he was originally from Thomond and had been brought up a Catholic before embarking on a career as an attorney.<sup>261</sup> However, in March 1679 he had claimed to have been Tyrone's deputy seneschal.<sup>262</sup> Tyrone, on the other hand, denied that he had ever employed him.<sup>263</sup> As for John MacNamara, his own printed account claimed him to be a Protestant from 'Cracolo' who had married into a Catholic family in Waterford, and that he had been 'often employed in many public concerns', including being 'a reciever of the Kings revenue of hearth money in several counties'.<sup>264</sup> The truth of these assertions remains virtually impossible to discern. However, Eustace Comyn was the first to come to official attention: in September 1678 he claimed that whilst in Carrick-on-Suir in 1673, he heard that John Brennan, the Catholic archbishop of Cashel, had knowledge of a plan for a French invasion of England and Ireland, and had apparently said that 'York was the right king and not he that has many bastards' before eventually attempting to have Comyn murdered. Comyn had, at this juncture, offered to reveal more to Ormond 'concerning a Popish Plot for the destruction of the King and kingdom'. He seems to have done this, for these allegations were essentially a prologue to the allegations he made in November 1680. In September 1678 he was kept in comparative comfort in Trim to facilitate his further disclosures; but equally, he did not universally impress those he came into contact with, and no mention was made of Tyrone at this stage.<sup>265</sup>

Tyrone's accusers went to England following the collapse of the case against him in March 1680; they had immunity from prosecution, for which both Boark and MacNamara were liable (the latter for horse stealing).<sup>266</sup> At some stage they presumably returned to Ireland, as both men were among the contingent of fourteen Irish witnesses who arrived in London in September 1680, and who had been directed to Shaftesbury by Titus Oates; all were reportedly hostile to both Ormond and Lord

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<sup>260</sup> *A narrative of the late Popish Plot in Ireland, for the subjugating thereof to the French King* (London, 1680).

<sup>261</sup> *A narrative of the late Popish Plot in Ireland*, p 25.

<sup>262</sup> 'Examination of Hubert Boark', 18 Mar. 1679 (BL Add MS 37,772, f.5).

<sup>263</sup> 'Examination of Rt. Hon. Richard, earl of Tyrone', 20 Mar. 1679 (BL Add MS 37,772, f.6).

<sup>264</sup> *A narrative of the late Popish Plot in Ireland*, p 26.

<sup>265</sup> 'Examination of Eustace Comyn', 28 Sept. 1678 (CSPD, 1678-79, p. 254).

<sup>266</sup> Ormond to Ossory, 10 Apr. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 298-9).

Chancellor Boyle.<sup>267</sup> Just prior to the submission of their evidence to the lords in November 1680, Boark and Thomas Samson were apparently present at a meeting in Burlington's house in London on 2 November, at which both Essex and Shaftesbury had attended: a suggestive indication of the close links between these Irish witnesses and the Whig opposition.<sup>268</sup>

In terms of their contribution to public discourse about an Irish Plot (such as it was) their claims did not automatically change as they made their way into print. The original testimony presented to the lords was printed without substantive amendment,<sup>269</sup> but expanded versions were also produced.<sup>270</sup> While Comyn's printed account was identical to that presented to the lords, those of Boark and MacNamara built upon their testimony with additional, often telling details. The published version of Hubert Boark's testimony was loyally dedicated to the King, and contained the same allegations as had been presented to parliament, but with additions. It almost immediately deployed a swipe at English manhood that could hardly endear the Irish to any prospective English reader. According to one of the conspirators, assessing the chances of success,

The English were good soldiers in their tongues over a cup of ale, with long pipes of tobacco in their mouths; but that they were too tender now to lie in the fields after thirty years rest, and that they were so foggy, so fat, and full of guts, that they were not able to fight any better than a company of swine.<sup>271</sup>

Otherwise it simply provided a broadly similar, if rather more detailed, version of what he had already sworn. Equally, MacNamara's published testimony (which was dedicated to Shaftesbury) largely reiterated his previous statements, but certain details were added. Both Plunkett and Brennan were explicitly implicated in the plot,<sup>272</sup> as was (somewhat surprisingly) Tyrone's father in law Anglesey.<sup>273</sup> It also dovetailed with the account of Hubert Boark, with particular emphasis on Boark's travails whilst

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<sup>267</sup> Wyche to Ormond, 18 Sept. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p 426-32).

<sup>268</sup> Longford to Ormond, 2 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, pp 474-5).

<sup>269</sup> The original testimonies of Boark and MacNamara were substantively reproduced in *A narrative of the late Popish Plot in Ireland*. Eustace Comyn's testimony was reproduced as *The information of Eustace Comyn* (London, 1680).

<sup>270</sup> *The information of Hubert Boark Gent. Touching the Popish Plot in Ireland, carried on by the conspiracies of the Earl of Tyrone*. (London, 1680); *The information of John MacNamara, Gent. Touching the Popish Plot in Ireland* (London, 1680). These two pamphlets adopted a very similar title and format; both were published by Randolph Taylor of London.

<sup>271</sup> *The information of Hubert Boark*, p 2.

<sup>272</sup> *The information of John MacNamara*, p 1.

<sup>273</sup> *The information of John MacNamara*, p 3, 16.

attempting to swear against Tyrone.<sup>274</sup> He also claimed that Tyrone had offered sanctuary to Patrick Lavalleyan 'who was to murder the King'.<sup>275</sup> Given the English political climate in which these allegations were published, details were included of 'a poor and needy Scotch-man coming in and pretending a Sham-Plot of the Presbyterians, and denying the Popish Plot' who 'was immediately kindly entertained and cherished, and well rewarded for his pains', though after implicating York in a Popish Plot, the Scotsman vanished.<sup>276</sup> Perhaps most significantly, MacNamara's published account, as well as reiterating that the Shannon estuary was to be the location for a French landing, claimed that the Irish army being surreptitiously raised to aid the French would be equipped by massive shipments of French weapons that would be landed 'in the creek of Ballirone...between the city of Waterford and the town of Dungarvan'.<sup>277</sup>

A related contribution came in the form of a pamphlet credited to Thomas Samson (who had also testified before the lords in relation to Tyrone), in which the testimonies that Boark and MacNamara had presented to the lords had been printed.<sup>278</sup> Rather suggestively, it was dedicated to Essex, and explicitly sought to vindicate the truth of the witnesses' claims.<sup>279</sup> The introduction asserted the international nature of the Catholic plot, whilst invoking the spectre of the 1641 rebellion.<sup>280</sup> Samson himself claimed to be from Dorset, and had settled in Munster after his wife's death; he had subsequently made his allegations out of 'the fear of God...love to the Protestant religion...my duty and allegiance to his majesty...[and] self-preservation'.<sup>281</sup> After all, he was embroiled in a dangerous business. Instead of the testimony he had sworn before the lords, Samson printed the testimonies he claimed to have provided to Ormond and the Irish council, one of which gave an account of the trial of Tyrone and a number of others in March 1680.<sup>282</sup> He claimed that Tyrone had been acquitted by a jury packed with Catholics, and 'seven of the ten of the jury that found the bill ignoramus, were kindred, tenants and friends of the earls prepared for the purpose'.<sup>283</sup>

<sup>274</sup> *The information of John MacNamara*, pp 8-13.

<sup>275</sup> *The information of John MacNamara*, p. 22.

<sup>276</sup> *The information of John MacNamara*, p. 20.

<sup>277</sup> *The information of John MacNamara*, p. 21.

<sup>278</sup> *A narrative of the late Popish Plot in Ireland*, pp 1-6, 10-13.

<sup>279</sup> *A narrative of the late Popish Plot in Ireland*, A1.

<sup>280</sup> *A narrative of the late Popish Plot in Ireland*, A2.

<sup>281</sup> *A narrative of the late Popish Plot in Ireland*, p. 28-9.

<sup>282</sup> *A narrative of the late Popish Plot in Ireland*, pp 14-24.

<sup>283</sup> *A narrative of the late Popish Plot in Ireland*, p. 24.

The allegations of another informer who did not testify before the lords, Edward Ivie, were also included.<sup>284</sup> However, while replete with further detail, they added little to what had already been alleged before the lords. But cumulatively, here were other, equally sinister aspects of the alleged Irish plot.

The third element of the allegations provided by Shaftesbury arose from the allegations of David Fitzgerald. He himself remains largely obscure, but his career is the easiest to discern of the various informers. He had been a tenant on the estates of Sir Thomas Southwell of Castle Mattress, County Limerick, a substantial landowner and the cousin of Sir Robert Southwell, clerk of the English Privy Council. Virtually nothing is known of his family and background, he had apparently married the daughter or stepdaughter of one Lieutenant Colonel Eaton.<sup>285</sup> Apparently a Protestant, Fitzgerald was occasionally referred to as 'Captain', but the precise meaning of this latter appellation is obscure.<sup>286</sup> But what can be discerned about Fitzgerald determines his relevance. Precisely when he came to official attention is uncertain, but by September 1679 Ormond and the Irish administration knew of him. In September 1679, after his claims first emerged, Fitzgerald had been questioned about a number of matters. Had he had any contact with those he had accused, especially since the onset of the popish plot, and had they spoken of any prospective attack on England? How would the rebels be armed, and would they be supplied from abroad? Were any towns or forts to be captured, and if so, which ones?<sup>287</sup> His eventual testimony would supply answers to all of these, which is perhaps suggestive of it being deliberately tailored to provide adequate answers to the same questions.

By mid-October 1679, Ormond had sent an account of the testimony of David Fitzgerald to London; these were the allegations that he suspected had been printed in London at Orrery's behest. By the time this had happened, a number of individuals accused by Fitzgerald had been detained, but their prosecution was hampered as Fitzgerald fell ill. This made matters especially difficult, for Ormond had viewed him as the most significant and reliable of a number of Irish informers emerging at this time

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<sup>284</sup> *A narrative of the late Popish Plot in Ireland*, pp 7-10.

<sup>285</sup> Orrery to Michael Boyle, 16 Sept. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 206-7). No Colonel Eaton was listed as having served in the Irish army at this time, though one Theophilus Eaton was listed as one of the Irish officers who subscribed to a loyal address to the King on 20 April 1661: Charles Dalton, *Irish Army Lists of King Charles II* (Dublin, 1907), p. 6.

<sup>286</sup> *The Irish evidence convicted by their own oaths* (London, 1682), p. 8.

<sup>287</sup> 'Interrogations to David Fitzgerald', 8 Sept. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 200).

(although, if required, he was prepared to rely upon circumstantial rather than direct evidence).<sup>288</sup> Fitzgerald's interrogation was an imperative, lest his illness be real and fatal. He was interviewed in his lodgings by Henry Jones (an experienced interrogator), and Fitzgerald expanded upon his allegations but provided no concrete evidence of any links between Catholics in England and Ireland, and thereby no evidence of interrelated plots in both kingdoms.<sup>289</sup> The specific nature of his claims at this time remain obscure, but the broad outline was consistent with what he later swore before the English parliament: that there were plans for a Catholic rebellion in Ireland intended to procure the restoration of the Catholic Irish to the lands that they had lost in the 1650s, to be carried out in conjunction with a French invasion and which would involve a general massacre of the Protestant settlers who now possessed those same lands.

He subsequently recounted his allegations to the Privy Council in London, thus prompting new indictments; it was reported in London that the figures implicated by Fitzgerald were to be prosecuted, and he would reportedly testify in person.<sup>290</sup> But his testimony was deemed insufficient without further corroborating evidence.<sup>291</sup> Indeed, in October 1680 John Odell, a justice of the peace in Limerick who had been involved in investigating his allegations, cast doubt on them, claiming that Fitzgerald had 'but magnified' the allegations of another informer, David Nash.<sup>292</sup> Credence was given to Nash but not Fitzgerald, whom Odell viewed as 'a sort of a wild hare-brained fellow', but this did not seem to have any effect on the presentation of Fitzgerald's evidence to the lords.<sup>293</sup>

However, Longford informed Ormond that much of his testimony was second-hand. Fitzgerald had not actually witnessed crucial events he mentioned that supposedly offered conclusive proof of the plot.<sup>294</sup> However, the broadly similar nature of the accounts of other Irish informers, as presented to the Lords, seemed to suggest some degree of corroboration. For example, the informer John MacNamara, whose statement had preceded Fitzgerald's, had implicated many of the same figures as Fitzgerald but also implicated Fitzgerald himself.<sup>295</sup> Arguably, and in the light of later

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<sup>288</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 8 Nov. 1679 (V & A, F.47.A.40, ff 65-6).

<sup>289</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 11 Nov. 1679 (V & A, F.47.A.40, ff 69).

<sup>290</sup> P.R.O. PC 2/68, 530-31 (nd); *London Gazette*, 13-7 May 1680; Jenkins to Lord Lieutenant, 14 May 1680 (*Cal. S.P.Dom. 1679-80*, pp 478-9).

<sup>291</sup> Ormond to Jenkins, 16 June 1680 (*CSPD, 1679-80*, pp 516-7).

<sup>292</sup> John Odell to Gerald Fitzgerald, 11 Oct. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v., pp 444-5).

<sup>293</sup> Donough Leyne to 'Capt. Drury', 29 Oct. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 463-5).

<sup>294</sup> Longford to Ormond, 6 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 479-81).

<sup>295</sup> *Lords jn*, xiii, pp 644-7.

events, this could be seen as evidence that the witnesses had simply been coached. But aside from the corroboration MacNamara provided by mentioning specific details subsequently mentioned by Fitzgerald (which could equally be seen as proof that both men had been tampered with), by implicating him in the plot, MacNamara would have enhanced Fitzgerald's credibility by suggesting that he did indeed possess inside knowledge. Of the various informers, Fitzgerald seemingly made the greatest impression on the House of Lords, and an expanded and embellished version of his testimony was subsequently published as *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot*.<sup>296</sup>

The two versions of Fitzgerald's allegations, as presented to the Lords and as published, are worth examining as a cumulative whole: one derived from the other. The pamphlet began with a straightforward assumption that the Catholic Irish

Suffer themselves to be led blindfold into fatal rebellions, by the pernicious counsels of their Priests, [but] the world may easily believe (by their proceedings in the last rebellion) that their designs are always on foot, and tending to no less than the utter subversion of the English government in Ireland, and establishing the power in the hands of their own natives and religion.<sup>297</sup>

The Catholic Church was the principal actor in this plot, and in the text the involvement of the clergy in the ostensible plot 'to promote a rebellion in Ireland' was repeated and reiterated.<sup>298</sup>

Fitzgerald freely admitted that he had no direct knowledge of this. However, he was quite certain that 'the conspiracy was very formidable, and had it gone on till full ripe, would have had very dire effects'.<sup>299</sup> He set the stage with this second-hand account before proceeding onto what he himself actually claimed to know. His account substantively repeated the allegations made before parliament, but there were crucial embellishments for the sake of potential readers. Once again, he began in 1673, with the arrival from France of Irish officers who were serving in the French army, and who intended to recruit in Ireland: Daniel MacNamara, John Lacy, Con 'Oneale', and a number of others. One of them satisfied Fitzgerald's curiosity by telling him that 'if the

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<sup>296</sup> Arran to Ormond, 6 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 477-8); *Lords journal*, xiii, p. 680; *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot, for the betraying that Kingdom into the hands of the French, Massacring all English Protestants there, and utter subversion of the Government and Protestant-Religion; as the same was successively carryed on from the Year 1662. Given in to both Houses of Parliament by David Fitzgerald Esq.* (London, 1680).

<sup>297</sup> *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot*, p. 1.

<sup>298</sup> *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot*, p. 3.

<sup>299</sup> *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot*, p. 4.



Dutch were once subdued, he did not question but that the French would establish the Roman Catholic religion in all the northern parts of Europe; and...that we should have the same laws established in Ireland that are in France'.<sup>300</sup> There was a pronounced emphasis on French plans to conquer northern Europe. Fitzgerald had been told by Pierce Lacy at some length of the importance of Irish soldiers in France to such designs with regards to Ireland, and that one of the purposes and outcomes of such an invasion and rebellion would be the overturning of the land settlement of the sixteen-sixties: 'their loss in the former Wars, would be retrieved in the next'.<sup>301</sup>

Fitzgerald became involved in this plan. The officers, in subsequent years, trafficked back and forth to France, arranging meetings under the pretext of enlisting recruits, and the Catholic hierarchy, who were deeply implicated, continued to facilitate it. Again, Moloney, Creagh and Lynch were all implicated as prime movers in this plot to 'be rid of that yoke of heresy which they had so long suffered under'.<sup>302</sup> The allegation of Papal sanction for the rebellion was repeated, for 'the King of England had no right to Ireland, but what he had from the Pope; and that the King being an heretic, the same right returned to the Pope again'; a notion reminiscent of the twelfth century Papal Bull *Laudabiliter* that had supposedly granted Ireland to the crown of England as a feudal fief, and which had been theoretically undermined by the break with Rome in the fifteen-thirties. And one of the plotters 'did say, that he did trust in God the natives of Ireland would not be long subjects to heretical government'; the clear implication was Catholic government, whether under York, the French, or a combination of both.<sup>303</sup>

This conspiracy had supposedly continued throughout the sixteen-seventies, and the rebellion would begin in Munster. A French landing was to take place near Tarbert on the River Shannon in November 1678, and Limerick was to be captured. The plotters had ingratiated themselves with the Limerick garrison (allegedly killing three officers in the process by excessive drinking). What that rebellion might ultimately involve was unsurprising. English Protestants had remained on their guard in recent years, 'having forty-one fresh in their memories'.<sup>304</sup> And as for how the plotters would successfully carry out the plan, 'they had no other way than to rise all in a night, and to

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<sup>300</sup> *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot*, p. 4.

<sup>301</sup> *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot*, p. 5.

<sup>302</sup> *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot*, p. 6.

<sup>303</sup> *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot*, p. 8.

<sup>304</sup> *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot*, p. 8.

proceed in a general massacre throughout the said Kingdom, and to kill man, woman and child, and not to leave a Protestant living in the Kingdom of Ireland'.<sup>305</sup>

However, much of Fitzgerald's account told of his troubles after learning of the plot rather than the ostensible plot itself; there is particular reference paid to his dealings with Sir Thomas Southwell throughout 1679, and the latter's efforts to prevent Fitzgerald from revealing what he knew.<sup>306</sup> The veracity of Fitzgerald's claims was bolstered by rebuttals of any suggestions that Southwell had any personal dispute with Fitzgerald, as Southwell himself maintained, and with more qualified assertions that Southwell had sought to engineer such a dispute on false pretences to intimidate Fitzgerald into silence.<sup>307</sup> It was also noted that the generally miserable fates of informers 'are not certainly prevailing motives to encourage any one to undertake the employment purely out of love to it'; consequently, Fitzgerald's own motives might seem the purer.<sup>308</sup> By way of conclusion, the final third of the pamphlet consisted of 'An appendix in a seasonable address to his country-men, the natives of Ireland',<sup>309</sup> in which Fitzgerald (or indeed another author) actively sought to dissuade them from rebellion, and to spare them 'the blood and confusions, the horrors, and desolations necessarily attending such insurrections and desperate rebellions'.<sup>310</sup> Reference was made to 'the blood of two hundred thousand peaceable Protestants and loyal subjects by you most barbarously butchered in the rebellion begun, 23 October 1641': a vastly exaggerated but often accepted number.<sup>311</sup> But there were other reasons why the Irish should not embark on such a course of action, up to and including the risk of incurring the wrath of God.<sup>312</sup> This plan for a rebellion was predicated on French assistance, but could the French be trusted to provide it? The claim that the Irish rebellion, having been planned in secret, would wait until the French actually invaded conveniently rendered any scepticism on the ground of ostensible French inactivity to be redundant; after all, the plot was being hatched in secret. However, would Louis XIV actually countenance a rebellion in the territory of a King who 'is the greatest and best (I had almost said) the

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<sup>305</sup> *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot*, pp 10-11.

<sup>306</sup> *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot*, pp 13-22

<sup>307</sup> *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot*, pp 14, 16.

<sup>308</sup> *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot*, p. 15.

<sup>309</sup> *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot*, p. 24.

<sup>310</sup> *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot*, pp 24-35.

<sup>311</sup> *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot*, p. 25. Contemporary exaggerations of the death toll from 1641 are discussed in Iain Donovan, 'Bloody news from Ireland': the pamphlet literature of the Irish massacres of the 1640s' (M.Litt, Trinity College, Dublin, 1995), pp 28-39.

<sup>312</sup> *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot*, pp 34-5.

only friend he hath in Europe’?<sup>313</sup> Such an insinuation about the contentious pro-Catholic leanings of Charles II was evident, and telling. This insinuation may explain the subsequent assertion that loyalty was due to Charles II by the Irish not only by natural right, but also because of his supposed magnanimity and mercy to the Irish since his restoration: were they the Catholic subjects of a Catholic king?<sup>314</sup> Even if Louis did get involved, he would be obliged to face an English army, and an appeal to English exploits and ‘gallantry’ at ‘Poitiers, Agincourt or Cressey’ offers a reminder who the audience for this pamphlet would have been.<sup>315</sup> Indeed, in the second section of the pamphlet that built upon Fitzgerald’s original account of the plot, the author had flown a notable kite when suggesting that it was up to prospective readers to determine ‘how this and a French design, and the Plot discovered against his Majesties life here in England doth agree, I will not take upon me to determine, but refer the inferences to the judicious reader’; in other words, they were to use their imaginations.<sup>316</sup> The third section of the pamphlet is of a very different nature and tone to the preceding segments, and may well have been the work of another author; the most telling suggestion of this lies in the fact that Ireland in itself is peripheral to this segment. The emphasis was on the (Catholic) French, and this offers the key to its meaning. This was a view of Ireland for an English audience, and like the testimonies of the other witnesses, it was harnessed to a primarily English political purpose: the barring of a Catholic from succeeding to the thrones of the three kingdoms.

On 8 November, the House of Lords demanded action on the basis of what they had heard. They ordered the arrest of unspecified ‘Irish ruffians’ (presumably the erstwhile assassins of the king). They ordered that Oliver Plunkett be permitted writing materials, that he might present his petition to the house. They requested that the King order that some of the individuals named in the testimonies – Brittas, Sir John Fitzgerald, Lt Col William Bradley, Pierce Lacy and Sir Thomas Southwell - be brought from Ireland, and that the expenses of the witnesses against them be paid. Irish business was to be the second item on the agenda (after the ‘bill against Popery’) when the house reconvened on the following Monday. And finally, the lords requested a conference, ‘in the painted

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<sup>313</sup> *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot*, p. 26.

<sup>314</sup> *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot*, pp 27-28, 29-30.

<sup>315</sup> *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot*, p. 26.

<sup>316</sup> *A Narrative of the Irish Popish Plot*, p. 7.

chamber, concerning some informations relating to the discovery of a horrid popish plot in Ireland'.<sup>317</sup> The House of Lords had resolved to act. The ultimate outcome of that decision would, however, be another matter entirely.

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<sup>317</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, pp 652-4

## Chapter 3:

### November 1680-July 1681

The testimony of at least some of the Irish witnesses – especially David Fitzgerald – had made a positive impression on the lords.<sup>318</sup> The Irish plot was by no means redundant as a political tool. Speaking in the commons on 2 November, Colonel John Birch, MP for Weobley, asked ‘what use did the Papists make in Ireland of the favours granted them by King Charles I? Did they not make use of it to the destruction of the Protestants, by rising up in rebellion, and massacring 100,000?’<sup>319</sup> However, the Irish witnesses made a definite impression on George Vernon, MP for Derby Town, who implored the house to consider the exclusion bill on 11 November.<sup>320</sup>

Mark Knights has persuasively argued that ‘exclusion’, as it had emerged in 1678-9, became merely the most obvious and convenient means of tackling the vexing question of a Catholic succession to the throne.<sup>321</sup> Furthermore, he has suggested that the term ‘exclusion crisis’ is ‘best reserved for the brief period between the rejection of the bill in the House of Lords in November 1680 and the dissolution of the Oxford parliament in March 1681’.<sup>322</sup> Yet it was during this period that the Irish informers were at their most prominent. Their role was inextricably linked to the ongoing exclusion proceedings, and the fact that those proceedings centred upon parliament: that was their stage. Their testimony as presented to the House of Lords had prompted action. Previously, on 25 October, the lords had ordered the lord mayors, sheriffs and J.P.’s of London, Middlesex and Surrey to apprehend Irish lodgers and inmates, and to pass their names to the Committee for Examinations; concerns about the presence of the Irish were evident even prior to the presentation of the Irish testimonies.<sup>323</sup> With regards to the allegations made by the informers, on 8 November Oliver Plunkett had petitioned the lords to be allowed access to his servant, James ‘Maccannagh’ (who had been a witness against him on 3 November) whilst imprisoned, and to be incarcerated at the crown’s expense (Plunkett had used up his own money while imprisoned in

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<sup>318</sup> Arran to Ormond, 6 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 477-8).

<sup>319</sup> *Parl. Hist.*, iv, col. 1182.

<sup>320</sup> *Parl. Hist.*, iv, col. 1205.

<sup>321</sup> Knights, *Politics and opinion in crisis*, pp 29-54.

<sup>322</sup> Knights, *Politics and opinion in crisis*, p. 5.

<sup>323</sup> Papists in London (returns), 8 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Rep. 11, app. 2*, pp 169-71).

Dundalk; the repressive climate had also ensured that the Catholic laity were unwilling or unable to provide funds<sup>324</sup>). The petition was delivered, but was not read to the house. However, it naturally prompted consideration of Plunkett's case, as Bourke, Hetherington, Murphy, MacNamara, and David Fitzgerald had all implicated Plunkett: it was suggested that they present their evidence to the Committee for Examinations once again. On 10 November the governor of Newgate, 'Captain Richardson', claimed that Plunkett 'believes there is some kind of plot against the English in Ireland', and that while he denied having any dealings with France, he had admitted to a correspondence with Spain. However, this may not have been especially sinister in itself: Catholic jurisdiction over Ireland was exercised via Brussels, which remained under Spanish control. But Plunkett was subsequently summoned before the lords.<sup>325</sup>

Richardson had claimed that 'Plunkett told him there was an Irish plot, and he would discover it...he said he knew somewhat of L[ord] Tyrone'. At the bar of the Lords Plunkett again denied any contact with the French, and professed his scepticism of the allegations made against him. He claimed to be aware of unspecified threats against his person by (or on behalf of) Tories: 'that his life was being aimed at, he mistrusted that there was a plot against the English', which seems a more plausible assertion than that previously attributed to Plunkett by Richardson.<sup>326</sup> However, between 8 and 10 November further allegations were provided to the lords; the informations of William Stokes, David Nash, and James Geoghegan.<sup>327</sup> Another was that of James Crew of 'Drumcondragh, in the county of Meath', who claimed to have overheard a conversation between 'his master, Lord Slane' and a priest called Netterville 'about bringing over a French army to Ireland to settle the Catholic religion': Crew insinuated that Plunkett was involved in this. The following day the lords resolved to grant him a pardon, and to issue warrants for the arrests of the priests cited in his evidence.<sup>328</sup> The increasing attention paid to the accumulation of Irish evidence was indicated when on 9 December a motion was entered in the lords to allow Edmund Murphy to print the testimony he provided to a subcommittee of the lords that had included both Essex and Shaftesbury.<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> Undated petition (Hanly, *Plunkett letters*, p. 551).

<sup>325</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, pp 658-9.

<sup>326</sup> 'Draft entry of statement mde by Capt. Richardson', 10 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Rep. 11, app. 2*, pp 169).

<sup>327</sup> 'Conspiracy in Ireland', 8-10 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Rep. 11, app. 2*, pp 146-7).

<sup>328</sup> 'Conspiracy in Ireland', 10 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Rep. 11, app. 2*, p. 194).

<sup>329</sup> 'Motion...for Murphy to print his examination', 9 Dec. 1680 (*HMC Rep. 11, app. 2*, p. 169).

Concerns about the Irish plot were also expressed in the English House of Commons. On 11 November Murphy, Hetherington and David Fitzgerald had repeated their allegations at the bar of the commons, and John Fitzgerald's written testimony was provided to the house.<sup>330</sup> On 12 November Hubert Boark, Eustace Comyn, Thomas Samson and John MacNamara were called to testify to the commons (the latter two were ordered to present full accounts in writing), and the commons resolved to demand pardons for these witnesses, and Edmund Murphy.<sup>331</sup> Charles acceded to this on 13 November, the same day in which bills restricting the Irish cattle trade were passed in the lords.<sup>332</sup>

Just as he had done in the past, Longford proved an assiduous chronicler of these developments. Hetherington had disparaged the Irish administration, and especially Ormond, whom he claimed to be 'the centre of all the conspirators'. While Edmund Murphy apparently gave a similarly critical account, David Fitzgerald gave a good account of both Ormond and his administration, perhaps returning the favour supposedly shown to him by Arran. All of these allegations were to be published (and thereby publicised); the informers were ordered to print their accounts at printers of their choice, whilst another debate on the Irish plot was seemingly imminent.<sup>333</sup> On 14 November the Privy Council considered a proposed bill for pardoning Boark, Murphy, Eustace Comyn, John Fitzgerald, John MacNamara, and Thomas Samson.<sup>334</sup> There was certainly a degree of credence, and perhaps even gratitude, shown to these informers by parliament. However, the promotion of the Irish plot was merely one facet of a multifaceted Whig campaign that sought to highlight the dangers of a Catholic accession to the throne. In this respect the Whig campaign failed on 15 November 1680, when the House of Lords rejected the exclusion bill.

On the same day Boark, MacNamara and Comyn presented their written testimonies to the commons.<sup>335</sup> Presumably they had an impact in the lower house, as on 19 November the commons committee inquiring into the Popish Plot had its powers extended to consider Ireland.<sup>336</sup> On 20 November David Fitzgerald was also granted

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<sup>330</sup> *Commons jn.*, ix, p. 651.

<sup>331</sup> *Commons jn.*, ix, pp 651-2.

<sup>332</sup> *Commons jn.*, ix, p. 652; *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 664.

<sup>333</sup> Longford to Ormond, 13 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 487-8).

<sup>334</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 149 (14 Nov. 1680).

<sup>335</sup> *Commons jn.*, ix, p. 654.

<sup>336</sup> *Commons jn.*, ix, p. 656.

permission to print his narrative.<sup>337</sup> The commons' new-found concern with the Irish informers saw the question of their material well-being referred to the treasury on 20 November, given that 'the number and circumstances of those persons are not yet well known'.<sup>338</sup> As it turned out the commissioners of the treasury did not know either, so on 23 November Hetherington was summoned to provide the names and details of the various witnesses in question.<sup>339</sup> Boark and MacNamara were granted permission to print their testimonies on 25 November.<sup>340</sup>

On 27 November an extensive address was sent from the commons to the King to warn Charles of the various dangers presented by the continued existence of Popery. It began by questioning the continued maintenance of the Tangier's garrison as it stood, given its numerous 'Popish' governors, 'and the Irish Papists among the soldiers of that garrison have been the persons most countenanced and encouraged' (though the garrison got its supply from parliament despite this). The general intention of Catholics was assumed not to have changed substantially in the two years since Oates had made his original allegations: they remained intent on fulfilling their long-held design of introducing Popery and eradicating Protestantism, or as it was put to Charles

To destroy your Protestant subjects in England; to execute a second massacre in Ireland; and so, with ease, to arrive at the suppression of our religion, and the subversion of the government.<sup>341</sup>

Implicit within the mention of a planned 'second massacre' in Ireland was the memory of the first: the 1641 rebellion. Unsurprisingly, Shaftesbury was kept well informed about events (or alleged events) in Ireland. He was told by an anonymous correspondent that Patrick Lavallyan had absconded to Cork; despite there being support for his arrest on the Irish council, there was considerable delay in issuing a warrant, and 'the opportunity was lost, which gave great discouragement to all honest men here'. When his letters from France were intercepted at Youghal, they were never transmitted to England: supposedly, the messenger from whom they had been taken had spent time in an Irish college in France and was related to Ormond. Such suggestions could only reflect poorly upon the viceroy. Other assertions were made to Shaftesbury about Protestant security in Ireland: that more troops would be required in Galway, due

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<sup>337</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 680

<sup>338</sup> *Commons jn.*, ix, p. 658.

<sup>339</sup> *Commons jn.*, ix, p. 661.

<sup>340</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 688.

<sup>341</sup> *Commons jn.*, ix, pp 665-7.



to both the alleged readmission of Catholics to the city and the dangerously Catholic composition of Connacht, given 'the Popish interest of the Lord Clanricard'; that considerable quantities of weapons were still hidden in Ireland, as too much notice had been given for the disarming of Catholics; and it was alleged that Protestants were being harassed and evicted from their homes in Queen's County by armed Catholics. This correspondent dwelt on the necessity for the raising of a militia in Ireland, for strengthening both Protestant morale and security. And at least some figures (presumably Protestant) allegedly favoured the appointment of Shaftesbury as viceroy.<sup>342</sup>

Within days Hetherington offered the commons the tantalising possibility of further evidence to support the alleged existence of an Irish plot. On 4 December he claimed to know of twenty-five other Irish witnesses, but 'did not think it convenient that the names or circumstances of them should be known'. However, nine Irish witnesses were being maintained at his charge: Edmund Murphy, John MacMoyer, George Murphy, Daniel Finan, James Callaghan, Bernard Dennis, Eustace Comyn, William Wydrell and James Morley. Virtually nothing can be discerned about most of these individuals, but the commons ordered that Hetherington be granted £100 for their upkeep. The commons also provided Hetherington with £70 in order to maintain the more prominent and potentially useful witnesses: David Fitzgerald, Thomas Samson, John MacNamara, Hubert Boark and John Fitzgerald.<sup>343</sup>

The various testimonies and indictments against Tyrone and those accused alongside him had been ignored by grand juries in Ireland, but the allegations were easily revived in a credulous English debate.<sup>344</sup> The material in question had been received in London, and was to be sent to both houses of parliament.<sup>345</sup> Even at Stafford's trial in November 1680 there were hints of Irish involvement, when Stephen Dugdale claimed that the Pope 'would assist the poor distressed Irish with both men and money'.<sup>346</sup> Oates also claimed at the trial that in January 1678 he had seen letters from Ireland showing

that they were as busy in Ireland as we were in England. We found that the Talbots, and other persons, were very zealous in raising of forces,

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<sup>342</sup> Unknown to Shaftesbury, 30 Nov. 1680 (PRO, Shaftesbury papers 30/24/50 ff 167-8).

<sup>343</sup> *Commons jn.*, ix, p. 670.

<sup>344</sup> 'Conspiracy in Ireland', 29 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Rep. 11*, app. 2, pp 218-20).

<sup>345</sup> Sunderland to Ormond, 30 Nov. 1680 (*Cal. S.P.Dom.*, 1680-81, p. 96).

<sup>346</sup> *State trials*, vii, col. 1319.

and were resolved to let in the French king, provided that the parliament should urge the king to break with France.<sup>347</sup>

As for events on the ground in Ireland, a subsequent report provided the conspirators with 'an account how ready the Irish were to vindicate their freedom and their religion from the oppression of the English as they called it'.<sup>348</sup> The informer Bernard Dennis (a former Dominican) again implicated James Lynch, who, while in Madrid in July 1677, claimed that Oliver Plunkett

is resolved this year, or with the next convenience, to bring in a French power into Ireland, thereby to support the Roman Catholics in England and Ireland; and if it pleases God, I myself, without any delay, will go into Ireland to assist in that pious work.<sup>349</sup>

The welter of innuendo easily attached itself to the unfortunate Stafford, who was asked by the lords on 7 December to explain 'that letter that comes from Ireland, to assure the Fathers here, that all things were in a readiness there too, as soon as the blow should be given'.<sup>350</sup>

There was, by this time, no shortage of Irish allegations. The ingredients with which to devise them seemed simple enough. If one proceeded from the assumption that Irish Catholics were intent on sending Protestants to a terrible fate (along the lines of 1641), one could easily produce a credible account bolstered by whispered innuendo, clerical activities, and links to Catholic Europe. For example, on 9 December the commons considered the information of one Peter Norris, who had been 'sent beyond the sea' (a fact attested to by Essex). His purpose had been 'to fetch over one Dowdall, an Irish priest, who managed the Plot both in England and in Ireland; and, mixing amongst them, was privy to the whole plot; which the said Dowdall, by several letters, had made known to Doctor Tonge'.<sup>351</sup> Essex, who would be frequently mentioned in relation to the presentation of such allegations, had apparently examined these letters. There were extant records of one Edward Dowdall travelling from Dover, but he had not been listed as a priest. Two figures were implicated in the affair: Anthony Day, a

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<sup>347</sup> *State trials*, vii, col. 1323.

<sup>348</sup> *State trials*, vii, col. 1323.

<sup>349</sup> *State trials*, vii, col. 1327.

<sup>350</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 703.

<sup>351</sup> *Commons jn.*, ix, p. 674.

doctor in the army in Flanders, and Thomas Sheridan.<sup>352</sup> The latter was Irish, and was close to York, having followed him into exile in March 1679. In May 1680 Sheridan had informed Leoline Jenkins that Essex and Israel Tonge had sent Norris overseas in order to find Dowdall; Sheridan may well have been concerned to stop any possible manipulation of Dowdall.<sup>353</sup> Both men, along with Roderick Mansell and a number of others, were examined on 10 December.<sup>354</sup> Subsequently, Sheridan was briefly imprisoned.

On 9 December Tyrone arrived in England and was imprisoned for treason, and the lords voted to permit Edmund Murphy to print his testimony. This was not the account presented to the lords, but was instead the information originally taken before a sub-committee on which Burlington, Essex and Shaftesbury had all been members.<sup>355</sup> The lords continued to seek Irish witnesses, issuing a demand that Paul Gormley and George Coddan be brought from Ireland to testify before them: according to Plunkett, both men were priests who had become informers to obtain their release from prison.<sup>356</sup> However, a potential rumbling of discontent on the part of at least one witness was presented to the Privy Council on 10 December: David Fitzgerald petitioned the council for his expenses, claiming that 'he hath been on his Majesties service since the 6<sup>th</sup> of December 1679'.<sup>357</sup> Whether this had any relevance to his later activities and recantation remains unclear.

Once again, concerns were voiced in parliament about Ireland. John Hampden, on 17 November, was concerned about the presence of Irish Catholic troops in Dumbarton's regiment that was to be sent to Tangiers.<sup>358</sup> Indeed, since 1663 Catholic worship had been permitted at the garrison, which was not governed by English religious laws: hence the continual presence of Catholic soldiers there.<sup>359</sup> And on 15 December, in a debate on the broad topic of Popery, Paul Foley raised once again the spectre of a Franco-Irish plot to massacre Protestants.<sup>360</sup> On 24 December Thomas Samson gave a (presumably unfavourable) account to the commons of the proceedings

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<sup>352</sup> *Commons jn.*, ix, pp 674-5.

<sup>353</sup> John Miller, 'Thomas Sheridan (1646-1712) and his 'Narrative'', *Irish Historical Studies*, 20 (1976), pp 109-11

<sup>354</sup> *Commons jn.*, ix, p. 676.

<sup>355</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p 709; 'Conspiracy in Ireland', 8 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Rep. 11, app. 2*, p. 168).

<sup>356</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p 715; Plunkett to Tanari, 21 Oct. 1680 (Hanly, *Plunkett letters*, pp 559-60).

<sup>357</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 163 (10 Dec. 1680).

<sup>358</sup> *Parl. Hist.*, iv, col. 1218.

<sup>359</sup> Charles McNeill (ed), 'Report on manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford', *Analecta Hibernica*, 2 (1931), pp 10-11.

<sup>360</sup> *Parl. Hist.*, iv, col. 1246.

of Sir John Davys in Ireland 'in the prosecution of the Popish Plot there'.<sup>361</sup> The allegations about the Irish plot were by no means abandoned in the commons; after all, there were genuine fears of such a thing coming to pass, regardless of whether the suggestion was harnessed to any given political cause. On 6 January 1681 the commons committee investigating the Irish plot reported back to the house, and a lively debate ensued. Over the following days the commons would order that the informations of John MacNamara, Maurice Fitzgerald, James Nash and Thomas Samson, which essentially reiterated and embellished the existing allegations against Tyrone and the others accused with him, be printed.<sup>362</sup>

Despite the defeat of the exclusion bill in the lords, other legislative solutions to the prospect of a Catholic succession would be attempted, most notably in proposed bills to limit the powers of any Catholic successor, and to form an association of Protestants.<sup>363</sup> The drafting of both had been initiated in the aftermath of the rejection of the exclusion bill. Proceedings on both were confined to the lords, and, for various reasons (notably the prorogation of 10 January 1681), they were never put to a vote, and both bills had key clauses that encompassed Ireland. The limitations bill proposed the creation of a council of forty-one members to exercise control over foreign policy and the Irish government, while the association bill, as drafted by Essex, proposed that virtually all civil and ecclesiastical office holders in Ireland and England would have to subscribe to an association of Protestants to guarantee the succession: all would have to take up arms on the king's death, for example, at least until parliament could be called. And logically, non-subscription would raise questions about the religious allegiance of those involved. Such implicit concerns about the condition of Ireland seemed to suggest that the assumption of the existence of an Irish plot might have found a receptive audience amongst the English political elite.

In January 1681 rumours of a plot in Ireland were printed in London: large quantities of weapons were apparently being moved around the country, and both John Fitzgerald and Lacy were on their way to London in connection with this.<sup>364</sup> Essex subsequently

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<sup>361</sup> *Commons jn.*, ix, p.695.

<sup>362</sup> *Commons jn.*, pp 701, 703; *The several informations of John Mac-Namarra, Maurice Fitzgerald, and James Nash* (London, 1680/81).

<sup>363</sup> Knights, *Politics and opinion in crisis*, pp 87-9.

<sup>364</sup> *The true Protestant mercury: or, occurrences forein and domestick*, 1-3 Jan 1681.

presented the testimonies of Maurice Fitzgerald,<sup>365</sup> Murtagh Downey,<sup>366</sup> and James Nash<sup>367</sup> to the lords; these accounts would also be printed. Sir John Fitzgerald was questioned about his alleged involvement in this, and while he admitted knowing Pierce Lacy, he denied any meeting with 'Thomas MacInerina', one of the Irish officers who allegedly provided a link between the plotters in Ireland and France.<sup>368</sup> Lacy himself was also questioned, and also denied that any 'MacInerina', nor Brittas, Fitzgerald or any Catholic bishop, was present at any meeting he was aware of. William Bradley denied that he was to hold any commission under Tyrone, or that he was involved in any Irish plot, as John MacNamara had claimed. Indeed, Bradley went so far as to deny any acquaintance with MacNamara, but conceded that he had once been in the same house as him, a concession that could easily be magnified to suggest his guilt.<sup>369</sup>

The presentation of these testimonies had been prompted by the initiation of proceedings against Tyrone, who was to be provided with copies of all the ostensible evidence against him as articles for his impeachment were drawn up.<sup>370</sup> On 6 January the commons resolved that there was indeed an Irish plot.<sup>371</sup> 'There is something in the evidence of the Irish plot that agrees with Forty-one. Then there was a great massacre in Ireland, as now intended'.<sup>372</sup>

On 7 January the lords ordered that Murtagh Downey and David Fitzgerald be summoned from Ireland, and came to a conclusion that would be publicly printed with the testimony of MacNamara, Fitzgerald and Nash. The house ordered that Bradley, Fitzgerald and Lacy remain in custody, and demanded the concurrence of the lords in their subsequent resolution that

There now is, and for divers years last past there hath been, a horrid and treasonable plot and conspiracy, contrived and carried on by those of the Popish religion in Ireland, for massacring the English, and subverting the Protestant religion, and the ancient established government of that kingdom.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 731. In May 1676 one 'Morrish Fitzgerald' was involved in a dispute over leases in Limerick to which he apparently laid claim: *Orrery papers*, pp 152-4.

<sup>366</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, pp 731-2.

<sup>367</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, pp 732-3.

<sup>368</sup> *The several informations of John Mac-Namarra, Maurice Fitzgerald, and James Nash*, p. 10.

<sup>369</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 733.

<sup>370</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 729, 739.

<sup>371</sup> *Parl. Hist.*, iv, col. 1278; *Parliamentary Debates*, ii, 38-45.

<sup>372</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, ii, pp 42-3.

<sup>373</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 733; *The several informations of John Mac-Namarra, Maurice Fitzgerald, and James Nash*, p. 15.

However, by the beginning of January cracks were beginning to emerge between the Irish witnesses. It was reported that Oates and David Fitzgerald were arguing over unspecified allegations made against Sir John Davys (presumably based on previous allegations that he had sought to obstruct witnesses); Fitzgerald was backing Davys, and was becoming the subject of smears himself.<sup>374</sup> By the end of January Hetherington would also be complaining about Fitzgerald.<sup>375</sup> But the forum in which the informers had stated their case was stripped away by the subsequent prorogation of the English parliament, which, according to Arran, was generally deemed to be a good thing, at least by the court and its supporters. Ormond would not have been impeached in parliament, as had previously been suggested, but he would have been the subject of an address criticising him for his supposed leniency to Papists, though such claims apparently carried little weight. Arran also noted that, in the absence of the English parliament, there was a possibility that preparations for an Irish parliament would resume.<sup>376</sup> Despite the prorogation, the informers Maurice Fitzgerald and Murtagh Downey were brought to England to testify, in accordance with the lords' address to the King of 7 January.<sup>377</sup>

'The plot in Ireland is every day more and more discovered to be a damnable design to massacre the Protestants there, and betray that kingdom into the hands of the French'.<sup>378</sup> However, the expense of maintaining the informers who had told of it was considerable: by 12 January 1681 the costs of investigating the so-called Irish plot had come to £1735.8s.4d.<sup>379</sup> Yet if elements of the Irish plot as revealed seemed to lose credence (if only through lack of further proof) there was always the possibility that attempts would be made to bolster it. It was explicitly stated in the Whig press in London that Tyrone and other Catholic nobles (both Irish and English) had been involved in the Franco-Irish plot 'to shake off, as they pretended, the English yoke, [and] make a general massacre of Protestants'.<sup>380</sup> A general expectation of some such conspiracy could be easily discerned. Some days earlier

The last packet from Ireland gives an account of a great light in the heavens, bigger than the moon, appeared directly over the city of Dublin, which in one

<sup>374</sup> John Davys to Ormond, 8 Jan. 1681 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 546-7).

<sup>375</sup> 'Newsletter to Roger Gastrell', 29 Jan. 1681 (*CSPD, 1680-81*, pp 150-5).

<sup>376</sup> Arran to Ormond, 11 Jan. 1681 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 550-51).

<sup>377</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p 739; Sunderland to Ormond, 11 Jan. 1681 (*CSPD, 1680-81*, pp 131-2).

<sup>378</sup> *The true Protestant mercury*, 8-11 Jan 1681.

<sup>379</sup> King to Lord Lieutenant, 12 Jan. 1681 (*CSPD, 1680-81*, p 133).

<sup>380</sup> *Protestant (Domestick) Intelligence*, 14 Jan 1681.

nights time moved over several parts of the city and at length, in sight of multitudes of people, fell through the air into the sea, as they judge, and was seen no more, and that the Protestants there have dreadful apprehensions of approaching danger.<sup>381</sup>

Presumably this was the great comet of 1680, as seen across northern Europe. The Whig press, while noting the arrest of Tyrone and numerous others (and embellishing the account by confidently asserting that two Jesuits were amongst them) had already noted its appearance over Ireland 'in the same manner and form as it appears to us'.<sup>382</sup> A 'blazing star in the west' had been seen from Kinsale on 17 December, and was visible for a number of nights (though the official gazette declined to interpret it for good or ill).<sup>383</sup> Yet the Whig press continued to assert the existence of the Irish plot, and of French preparations to invade Ireland: 'the magistrates of Dublin are very apprehensive, upon some new discoveries of the plot, that the Papists have not some considerable hopes to reduce that kingdom to the see of Rome'.<sup>384</sup>

The intersection between the Irish informers and the Whig opposition was illustrated by a request by Eustace Comyn to a correspondent in Clonmel. He requested a certificate to prove that he had been refused a warrant to apprehend Plunkett, John Brennan, and Robert Power, the Catholic dean of Waterford: it was to be sent to Shaftesbury's house.<sup>385</sup> It was a nexus that remained potent, and it highlighted concerns that the English government could not afford to ignore, even if it had been inclined to do so. On 21 January 1681 the Privy Council ordered Middlesex J.P.'s to take the examinations of 23 Irish witnesses, and to forward them to the council: the vast majority of these witnesses would play no further role in the proceedings relating to the Irish plot, so presumably their allegations were deemed to be of little or no value.<sup>386</sup> The Privy Council also acceded to a request from these Irish witnesses that they be pardoned of any crimes before providing any testimony; a suggestive request. This was granted, and was applicable to accusations and self-incrimination, but it was to be

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<sup>381</sup> Newsletter, 13 Jan. 1681 (*HMC Rep. 14, app. 4*, pp 124-5)

<sup>382</sup> *Protestant (Domestick) Intelligence*, 31 Dec 1680.

<sup>383</sup> *London Gazette*, 27-30 Dec 1680.

<sup>384</sup> *The true Protestant mercury*, 15-8 Jan 1681.

<sup>385</sup> Eustace Comyn to Richard Denison, 1 Jan. 1681 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p 541).

<sup>386</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 191 (21 Jan. 1681). These witnesses were: George Coddan, Hugh Duffy, John McClave, Bryan O'Hillen (sic), Bryan [Quillan], Cornelius McGuire, Henry O'Neale, Owen O'Neill, James Murphy, Phelim O'Neale, Silvester Castle, Peter [Sinting], Michael Reilly, John Suber (sic), Pierce Kehoe, Jonas Comen (sic), Manus O'Guire, Owen Murphy, Thomas Kehoe, John Walsh, Patrick Ballard, James Fitzgerald, Patrick Comerford.

restricted to immunity from charges of treason and misprision of treason.<sup>387</sup> Two days later, on 28 January, the council ordered that a number of witnesses who had previously been summoned before it, and whose supposedly authenticated testimonies had been presented by Edmund Warcup – George Coddan, Maurice Fitzgerald, Murtagh Downey and Paul Gormley - were to give securities for their appearance, and were then to receive funds to return to Ireland.<sup>388</sup> In Dublin, it was reported that ‘the Papists here are much elevated at the news of the prorogation of the Parliament, insomuch that they hector about the streets with swords and other arms’, thus justifying Protestant fears of their intentions.<sup>389</sup>

However, it was known by this time that Hetherington had levelled a complaint against David Fitzgerald, and apparently had witnesses to prove this.<sup>390</sup> Fitzgerald had already suggested that Irish witnesses had been suborned, a claim that had already been ridiculed in the Whig press.<sup>391</sup> But on 2 February Fitzgerald was, unusually, granted a full pardon by the Privy Council. A number of Irish witnesses who had previously been examined in Middlesex were summoned to testify before the council, but on 4 February a report from Middlesex stated that these men knew nothing, and had in fact been suborned by Eustace Comyn to bolster his own testimony.<sup>392</sup> On the same day, Hetherington presented his accusations against Fitzgerald, who seems to have levelled his own charges against Hetherington prior to this.<sup>393</sup> In spite of these proceedings, public assertions of an Irish plot continued: it was reported that meetings in Cork were addressed by a sinister figure exhorting the people to rebellion: ‘who this great man is, is not certainly known (perhaps another Nuncio from the Pope, like that in ’41, who managed that horrid massacre and rebellion)’. Rumours were abroad of French activity, and of gunpowder seized in Limerick.<sup>394</sup>

It was probably inevitable that the lack of anything other than unsubstantiated reports, or the statements of these Irish witnesses, that might prove the existence of any Irish plot would prompt reflection as to whether it actually existed. The Privy Council began to sift through the various Irish witnesses, to determine which ones would be

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<sup>387</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 194 (26 Jan. 1681).

<sup>388</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 197 (28 Jan. 1681).

<sup>389</sup> *The true Protestant mercury*, 29 Jan-1 Feb 1681.

<sup>390</sup> Newsletter to Roger Garstell, 29 Jan. 1681 (*CSPD, 1680-81*, pp 150-1).

<sup>391</sup> *The true Protestant mercury*, 22-5 Jan 1681.

<sup>392</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 204 (2 Feb. 1681); 207 (4 Feb. 1681). The witnesses in question were Peter Lynch, Sylvester Castle (sic), Michael Reilly, John [Lukir], Edward Comin (sic) and Thomas Kehoe.

<sup>393</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 206 (4 Feb. 1681).

<sup>394</sup> *The true Protestant mercury*, 1-5 Feb 1681.



most useful in Oliver Plunkett's eventual trial. This may well have been prompted by the eventual hearing, before the King and council on 11 February 1681, of the emerging dispute between David Fitzgerald and William Hetherington.

Interestingly, an account of this hearing was published.<sup>395</sup> It was unashamedly hostile to Hetherington, and went to considerable lengths to highlight discrepancies and evasions in his attempt to defend himself against Fitzgerald. Printed anonymously in London, it exhibited a level of detail, and a familiarity with Hetherington's background and activities, that suggest that it may have had some kind of official sanction or assistance. While fears of another Irish rebellion were often genuine, it could not have been lost on some members of the English government that these witnesses were often of a dubious nature and had found favour with elements of the Whig opposition, and their allegations were as yet unsubstantiated. As the political tide in England began to turn against the exclusionist case and its proponents, this account of the dispute between the two ostensible witnesses may have had a certain propaganda value.

Hetherington – 'the principal manager of the Irish evidence, as he styles himself'<sup>396</sup> - was accused of accepting and dispensing bribes to guarantee the production of false testimony, and questions were raised about his dubious past and his relationship with Edmund Murphy. Equally, the charges apparently levelled at Fitzgerald by Hetherington were reproduced: he was accused of seeking to induce and threaten the various Irish witnesses into withdrawing their allegations with the backing of Ormond and the King, who had supposedly given him money and other inducements to 'break Shaftesbury's knot'.<sup>397</sup> Such allegations were rebutted at considerable length, and in a manner inevitably hostile to Hetherington and, by implication, those who may have supported or assisted him. The Privy Council subsequently ordered that Hetherington was to be prosecuted for tampering with witnesses and procuring allegations against Ormond, York, the Queen, and Archbishop Michael Boyle, the Irish Lord Chancellor, and for misleading the council.<sup>398</sup> Fitzgerald subsequently petitioned the council on 16 February to ensure the prosecution of Hetherington and another informer, Bernard Dennis, on the grounds that these two were likely to abscond.<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> *A true and brief account of the proceedings between Mr. David Fitzgerald and William Hetherington, before his Majesty in council on Friday the 11<sup>th</sup> of February 1680/81* (London, 1681).

<sup>396</sup> *A true and brief account of the proceedings*, p. 2.

<sup>397</sup> *A true and brief account of the proceedings*, p. 4.

<sup>398</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 211 (11 Feb. 1681).

<sup>399</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 217 (16 Feb. 1681).

Fitzgerald was not alone in his turnaround. On 16 February John MacMoyer, Edmund Murphy, James Callaghan, Daniel Finan, Hugh Duffy and George Murphy had petitioned the council for maintenance.<sup>400</sup> One week later, on 23 February, they complained that they had been ‘most scandalously and maliciously vilified and abused’ by Hetherington, Dennis, and another obscure figure, Jerome Battye, whom they accused of complaining about the conduct of the council in the dispute between Fitzgerald and Hetherington.<sup>401</sup> Two days later a report on these three men by John MacMoyer was received, to be sent to the attorney-general, and Fitzgerald was granted an allowance of 40 shilling per week.<sup>402</sup> However, on the same day, however, a further nine Irish witnesses were discharged as unnecessary.<sup>403</sup>

Despite what could be seen as the undermining of the Irish witnesses and their evidence, fears of the Irish, as reported in England, had not necessarily abated: it was reported that Thomas Sampson had captured Tyrone’s butler, one Laurence Swillivant, in London; the latter was apparently in possession of bullets and a sword that could only be put to a nefarious purpose.<sup>404</sup> However, if such reports were linked to fears of an Irish plot along the lines of what had been suggested before parliament, there was a problem: the emerging possibility that the Irish informers may not have been telling the truth. In late January it had already been suggested publicly that there was a plan ‘to scandalize and subvert the Irish evidence of the Popish Plot, and to blame it instead upon Protestants’, which is one of the charges Hetherington had subsequently levelled against David Fitzgerald.<sup>405</sup> Soon afterwards, the Middlesex grand jury were reported to have brought a bill against Fitzgerald for supposedly suborning witnesses himself.<sup>406</sup> But John MacMoyer, Hugh Duffy (another renegade Armagh cleric) and Paul Gormley also accused Hetherington of attempting to induce them (and others) to swear against the Queen and York. This hearing was to be deferred, but the attorney-general was apparently intent on prosecuting Hetherington.<sup>407</sup> Indeed, the *London Gazette* reported on an unlicensed pamphlet that, apparently on Fitzgerald’s word, implicated a ‘Mr

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<sup>400</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 217 (16 Feb. 1681).

<sup>401</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 221 (23 Feb. 1681).

<sup>402</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 222 (25 Feb. 1681).

<sup>403</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 226 (25 Feb 1681). The witnesses in question were: Edward Cominge, George Coddan, John Luber, Thomas Kehoe, Paul Gormley, Peter Smith, Sylvester Castle, James Murphy, Michael Ratyer (sic).

<sup>404</sup> *Protestant (Domestick) Intelligence*, 21 Jan. 1681; 18 Feb. 1681.

<sup>405</sup> *Protestant (Domestick) Intelligence*, 25 Jan. 1681.

<sup>406</sup> *Protestant (Domestick) Intelligence*, 18 Feb. 1681.

<sup>407</sup> Francis Gwyn to Ormond, 26 Feb. 1681 (*HMC Rep. 7, app.*, p. 744).

Sheringdam', widely believed to be Thomas Sheridan. This was refuted: the accusations were against 'one Hetherington', who was to be summoned before the council.<sup>408</sup> On 2 March the Privy Council heard the opinion of the attorney-general on the allegations against Hetherington and the others; namely that they were true, and they had indeed been involved in suborning witnesses. Their prosecution was now ordered.<sup>409</sup> On 11 March 1681 the Privy Council pardoned Fitzgerald for treason, and other misdemeanours (though not for murder, robbery, perjury or buggery).<sup>410</sup>

However, these incidents did not automatically mean that proceedings against those accused of involvement in the plot were to be discontinued. On 22 March Sir Thomas Southwell was permitted to receive a copy of Fitzgerald's testimony against him. Southwell, who was 73, denied the allegations that he, along with Brittas, Lacy and Sir John Fitzgerald, was 'conspiring against his Majesty, and abetting a French invasion and a general massacre of all Protestants in Ireland'. Southwell was 'a true English Protestant, and the information against him arose from private revenge'; he had previously prosecuted Fitzgerald for non-payment of rent, and the same charges had already been dismissed by a grand jury in Limerick. Besides, Southwell made the fair point that as a substantial landowner and a Protestant he was unlikely to benefit from such a plot.<sup>411</sup> The next day it was resolved that similar petitions for release on behalf of Fitzgerald and Lacy were also to be considered, as indeed they were. Despite the lack of compelling evidence, and the fact that these allegations had been disregarded in Ireland, and the fact that Piers Lacy was in extremely poor health, the three men remained in jail.<sup>412</sup>

There was, however, another Irish informer whom posterity did not consign to obscurity: Edmund Fitzharris. The Catholic Fitzharris had, with Edmund Everard, written a tract (*The true Englishman speaking plain English*) that went beyond the advocacy of excluding York from the throne to suggest that Charles was just as dangerous as his brother, if not more so, and should therefore be deposed.<sup>413</sup> This seems to have been part of an attempt to discredit the Whigs, but it backfired: Fitzharris was betrayed by Everard, and was imprisoned on a charge of high treason. Certainly, the Catholic Church was concerned that the arrest of Fitzharris might serve to inflame

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<sup>408</sup> *London Gazette*, 24-8 Feb. 1681; *Protestant (Domestick) Intelligence*, 1 Mar. 1681.

<sup>409</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 231 (2 Mar. 1681).

<sup>410</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 246 (11 Mar. 1681).

<sup>411</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 748; 'Conspiracy in Ireland', 22 Mar. 1681 (*HMC Rep. 11, app. 2*, p. 270).

<sup>412</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, pp 750-51; 'Conspiracy in Ireland', 23 Mar. 1681 (*HMC Rep. 11, app. 2*, pp 270-1).

<sup>413</sup> The text is reproduced in *State trials*, viii, col. 357-61.

feelings even further against Irish Catholics.<sup>414</sup> Fitzharris was alleged to have links to a plot whereby ‘the King of France had a design on Ireland’.<sup>415</sup> As for the discoveries made by Fitzharris and seemingly confirmed by ‘Maurice-Gerald’ (presumably Fitzgerald), ‘the design being of so horrid a nature in all its branches, we cannot give you the particulars’.<sup>416</sup> However, if such reports were intended to maintain the pressure on parliament to alter the succession in favour of a Protestant, it was in vain: the previous day, 28 March, had seen Charles dissolve the brief Oxford parliament after it had reintroduced the exclusion bill.

Such drastic action on the part of the king came from a position of strength, as was evident in Charles’s subsequent declaration. The fact that doubts were slowly emerging about the Irish witnesses should be seen against this backdrop: in political terms the tide was turning against the Whigs who had promoted them. Thus, lingering uncertainties about the Irish witnesses would become more public over time. Ormond had privately held them in contempt from an early stage, deeming them ‘creatures that no schoolboy would trust them with a design for the robbing of an orchard’.<sup>417</sup> Charles II was told that they were motivated by private malice, and were ‘envious, mallicious, viperous informers, who durst not show their face, in any place of justice’.<sup>418</sup> Equally, in 1681 a somewhat tongue in cheek pamphlet (complete with brogue) ascribed to the informer Maurice Fitzgerald of Limerick - presumably the same individual mentioned in relation to Fitzharris – sought to exonerate Lacy and Sir John Fitzgerald, whilst damning Hetherington once more for suborning evidence. It also sought the measure of those Irish witnesses who had intended to provide it.

De parliaments did vote an Irish plot too upon my narraty, and dey did vote it upon a lye, for I never saw my narraty till I came here; but peoples makes narratyees and plots in London; and put it upon me fait.

And as for the reasons why:

By my shoul, if you vill be giving your pardons and your moneys, you will have a tousand Kings evidences; don’t you tink when cow-stealers, horse-

<sup>414</sup> ‘News from Brussels’, 22 Mar. 1681 (*Nunziatura di Fiandri*, ii, pp 77-8).

<sup>415</sup> ‘Popish Plot’, 26 Mar. 1681 (*HMC Rep. 11, app. 2, p. 273*).

<sup>416</sup> *Protestant (Domestick) Intelligence*, 129 Mar. 1681.

<sup>417</sup> Ormond to Ossory, 12 Apr. 1680 (*H.M.C. Ormonde*, ns. v, pp 302-3).

<sup>418</sup> [Walsh] to Charles II, n.d. (Bodl., Carte MS 214, ff 12-3)

stealers and murderers are to be hang'd, but to shave demselves from de gallows, dey will come to London and be your Kings evidence.<sup>419</sup>

In this light, self-interest was the basis for the informer's claims, which had initially seemed credible. David Fitzgerald had reportedly suggested that those Irish witnesses who had chosen to stand over their allegations should be hanged.<sup>420</sup> But informing was by no means a profitable occupation: one 'Hurley', another Irish witness, apparently died destitute, 'for want of necessaries'.<sup>421</sup> Another, 'Geoghegan' (presumably James Geoghegan) was reportedly executed in Ireland as a cattle thief in April-May 1681.<sup>422</sup> And English official concern about the quality of these witnesses would be evident when the Privy Council sought to determine if further allegations against Plunkett, as provided by Ormond, would be of any relevance to his eventual trial.<sup>423</sup>

The information of Florence Weyer, Brian O'Quinn, Hugh O'Hanlon and John McClave, as previously presented to the council by Edmund Warcup, the zealous J.P. for Middlesex and Westminster who had been tasked with examining both English and Irish witnesses, was to be sent to the attorney-general for examination in preparation for Plunkett's trial.<sup>424</sup> Certainly, the various witnesses did not seem to be receiving much in the way of official support. There was a dispute between the Irish witnesses *circa* 9-10 April over the money for their maintenance that was to have been distributed by Hetherington, which they had not yet received. A private collection was organised to tide them over until a more official arrangement could be organised. John Rouse, who was tasked with distributing it (and who would be executed in 1683 for complicity in the Rye House Plot), gave varying sums to John and Dennis MacNamara, Thomas Samson, Bernard Dennis, 'O'Neale and his two sons', Owen Callaghan, Hubert Boark, Murtagh Downey, and some English witnesses; £90 was raised for the purpose, and on Shaftesbury's explicit instruction Edward Fitzharris's wife also received some.<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>419</sup> *A true discovery of the Irish Popish Plot, made by Maurice Fitz-Gerald* (London, 1681), np. Such ostensibly phonetic renderings of Irish speech patterns had been evident in English drama since at least the sixteenth century: J.O. Bartley, *Teague, Shenkin and Sawney: being an historical study of the earliest Irish, Welsh and Scottish characters in English plays* (Cork, 1954), pp 39-43, 127-30.

<sup>420</sup> *Protestant (Domestick) Intelligence*, 5 Apr. 1681.

<sup>421</sup> *Protestant (Domestick) Intelligence*, 8 Apr. 1681.

<sup>422</sup> 'News from Ghent', 9 May 1681 (*Nunziatura di Fiandri*, ii, p. 79).

<sup>423</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 258 (6 Apr. 1681).

<sup>424</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 265 (13 Apr. 1681).

<sup>425</sup> 'Examination of John Rouse, 9 July 1681' in Joseph George Muddiman, 'Depositions about the Popish Plot (from the Shaftesbury Papers, bundle 43), *Notes and Queries*, 147 (1924), pp 185-6.

However, William Roberts, a schoolmaster from Southwark who had drafted the written statements of John MacMoyer, Edmund Murphy and other witnesses in their linguistic difficulties, now claimed to have heard an offer of information from Bernard Dennis on 14 November 1680 that he could provide information about the Queen (Dennis subsequently found himself in danger after giving this information to the Lord Mayor of London and the relevant commons committee). Murphy corroborated this, and later claimed to have witnessed a meeting in Madrid where it was agreed that as the French would land in Ireland to aid the Irish 'to massacre the Protestants', given that English forces would seek to deal with this, it would be a perfect opportunity for a Spanish force to attack England; a surprising assertion, as up until this point Spain had played only a tangential role in the informer's allegations.<sup>426</sup>

Such continual suggestions of the falsehood of the claims made by the Irish informers could not be disregarded. Warcup's assessment of the witnesses concluded that Florence Weyer's information should be sent to Dublin so that Ormond could investigate key aspects of it; specifically, whether or not any 'consults' had been held in Ireland under Plunkett, as was previously alleged by informers such as John MacMoyer.<sup>427</sup> 'The last was in November last, and, if that be true, the plot in Ireland still goes on. If false, the untruth of Weyer's information may detect other untruths, this being the most material information I have yet met in relation to the Irish plot'. The latter point was perhaps the most revealing: Warcup also suggested that the utility of the various Irish witnesses be assessed, in order to get rid of many who were continually demanding maintenance from the Privy Council.<sup>428</sup> The council subsequently ordered this, with particular reference to Plunkett's trial, in order to determine which witnesses were to be retained.<sup>429</sup> On 22 April Sir Robert Sawyer, the attorney-general, reported back to the Privy Council having determined which witnesses were relevant to the impending trials of Plunkett and Hetherington, respectively: the remainder could now be dispensed with.<sup>430</sup>

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<sup>426</sup> McNeill (ed), 'Report on manuscripts in the Bodleian Library', pp 90-1.

<sup>427</sup> Information 'found among John Moyer's papers', Bodl., Carte MS 39, f. 100. This was apparently delivered to the committee investigating the Irish plot on 28 Dec. 1680.

<sup>428</sup> Warcup to Jenkins, 15 Apr. 1681 (*CSPD, 1680-81*, pp 240-1).

<sup>429</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 270 (15 Apr. 1681).

<sup>430</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 277 (22 Apr. 1681). Those to be retained for Plunkett's trial were: Hugh Duffy, Cornelius McGiver, John McClave, Owen Murphy, Florence Weyer, Maurice Fitzgerald, Murtagh Downey, Phelim Henry and Owen O'Neale. Those to be retained for Hetherington's trial were: [?] Fitzgerald, John MacMoyer, Paul Gormley, and George Coddan.

Sixteen Irish witnesses were subsequently dispensed with on 27 April 1681, the same day on which proceedings were initiated against Fitzharris.<sup>431</sup> But in May, Owen O'Callaghan claimed that 'last March' he had heard Hetherington and others discuss the possibility of killing the Queen, Ormond, York, Arran, Michael Boyle, Sir William Davies, and Sir John Davys. He supposedly offered O'Callaghan £10, with a promise of a further £100 per annum from parliament if he would testify against them, and especially against the Queen. Hetherington informed him that he would be instructed as what to say.<sup>432</sup> David Fitzgerald had also apparently persuaded six of the Irish witnesses to testify that Hetherington had bribed them to make allegations against Ormond 'and others'.<sup>433</sup> Equally, in early June Eustace Comyn claimed that he had been told by Hetherington that 'those witnesses' were worthless, and by George Coddan that there were in fact no material witnesses against Oliver Plunkett, or indeed anyone else. Comyn claimed that he had been bribed to make further allegations, and had been told that the offer of a pardon was the reason why so many allegations of this nature had been made.<sup>434</sup> After all, a pardon had been promised by proclamation to those who could provide any information on a plot.

Oliver Plunkett's imprisonment was of inevitable concern to the Catholic Church. As far back as December 1680, the Pope had been personally concerned about his plight in a situation in which the church took the view that the English Parliament was intent on wiping out Catholicism across the three kingdoms.<sup>435</sup> While Moloney had fled to France, the Spanish ambassador had unsuccessfully attempted to intercede on Plunkett's behalf, and it was hoped that York could be prevailed upon instead.<sup>436</sup> But such efforts came to nothing. It was reported that Hetherington and MacNamara had been arrested for suborning witnesses, but as befitted the Whig organ that published this, it was suggested that this may have arisen from private malice by a witness whom Hetherington had declined to lend money to.<sup>437</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 280 (27 April 1681). The witnesses were: Brian O'Quinn, James Murphy, Sylvester Castle, Peter Lynch, Michael Rigly, John Luber (sic) Thomas Kehoe, William MacNamara, Hugh O'Hanlon, Edmund Comyn, George Murphy, Daniel Finan, Lewis Callaghan, John Boark, John MacNamara, [Thomas] Sampson.

<sup>432</sup> 'Information of Owen O'Callaghan', 14 May 1681 (*CSPD, 1680-81*, pp 276-7).

<sup>433</sup> Arran to Ormond, 17 May 1681 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, vi, pp 64-5).

<sup>434</sup> 'Information of Eustace Comyn', 3 June 1681 (*CSPD, 1680-81*, pp 303-4).

<sup>435</sup> Cibo to Tanari, 14 Dec 1681 (*Nunziatura di Fiandri*, viii, pp 91-2).

<sup>436</sup> Tanari to Secretariate of State, 17 May 1681 (*Nunziatura di Fiandri*, ii, p 68).

<sup>437</sup> *The true Protestant mercury*, 21-5 May 1681.

On 9 June 1681 Edward Fitzharris was tried for high treason. There was undoubtedly a political dimension to his case, as his conviction could have implications for the remaining witnesses and the uses to which they might yet be put. Everard alleged that Fitzharris had sought to induce him into serving 'the French and the Popish interest'.<sup>438</sup> Fitzharris supposedly induced Everard to write the pamphlet that, amongst other things, repeated allegations that Charles I had been involved in the 1641 rebellion, and that Charles II retrospectively approved of this by promoting Irish officers (such as Mountgarret) who had supposedly been involved.<sup>439</sup> Despite the fact that figures such as Arran testified in his favour, Fitzharris was found guilty and sentenced to death.

Plunkett's trial was also in June. According to Gilbert Burnet, it was known that Plunkett had previously censured some of the clerics who testified against him, such as Hugh Duffy, Murphy and MacMoyer. The witnesses against Plunkett had already appeared before a grand jury, but the foreman, 'who was a zealous Protestant', told Burnet that they had contradicted each other so much that 'they would not find the bill. But now they laid their story better together, and swore against him'.<sup>440</sup> It is not intended to provide a full account of the trial, or of the circumstances that had led to it: that has been done elsewhere.<sup>441</sup> The evidence was opened by the attorney general to consist of two parts, first 'to prove a general plot in Ireland to bring in the French, to raise an army, and to extirpate and destroy all Protestants and the Protestant religion, and secondly to prove Dr. Plunkett concerned, and that as a principal agent and contriver in that design'.<sup>442</sup>

Plunkett was accused of involvement in such a plot by most of the witnesses against him: Florence Weyer, Henry O'Neill, 'Neile O'Neale' (sic), Hugh Duffy, John 'MacLegh' (sic), and John MacMoyer.<sup>443</sup> Edmund Murphy was apparently repentant and proved an unhelpful witness. Despite having sworn against Plunkett before a Westminster grand jury, he claimed at the trial to have forgotten his previous testimony. He attempted again to implicate Ormond and York, stating that Plunkett had intended to raise 60-70,000 men, but only to support York against Monmouth should the need

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<sup>438</sup> *State trials*, viii, col. 342.

<sup>439</sup> *State trials*, viii, col. 344.

<sup>440</sup> *Burnet's History of my own time*, ii, p. 292.

<sup>441</sup> John Brady, 'Oliver Plunkett and the Popish Plot', i-iii; Curtayne, *Trial of Oliver Plunkett*, *passim*; Ó Fiaich, *Oliver Plunkett*, pp 78-94.

<sup>442</sup> Anonymous newsletter, 11 June 1681 (Bodl., Carte MS 72, f. 526).

<sup>443</sup> *State trials*, viii, col. 447-500; *The tryal and condemnation of Dr Oliver Plunkett titular primaye of Ireland, for high-treason* (Dublin, 1681).



arise. While claiming French involvement, he did not directly implicate Plunkett and claimed that the other witnesses were motivated by malice.

However, his performance was seen as proof that he had been tampered with.<sup>444</sup> As for the other witnesses, 'their testimony throughout the whole was very conformable and agreeing in all the parts'.<sup>445</sup> Consequently, on 15 June 1681 Edward Fitzharris and Oliver Plunkett were sentenced to death in London for high treason.<sup>446</sup> The following day the various witnesses against Plunkett (with the notable exception of Edmund Murphy) petitioned the Privy Council for the pardons that were due in exchange for their testimony.<sup>447</sup>

There was still unresolved business with regards to other aspects of the outstanding prosecutions based on the allegations of the Irish plot. On 16 June Sir John Davys petitioned the Privy Council, complaining about the delay in his trial due to the absence of key witnesses – Boark, Fitzgerald, and Samson – in England.<sup>448</sup> On 23 June James Carroll – now 'of Dublin' – sought compensation from the council for discovering the plot in 1672.<sup>449</sup> Equally, on 16 February, the Privy Council had ordered that the allegations of James Carroll, a leather worker and Freeman of London, be investigated.<sup>450</sup> He had previously claimed to have been the first discoverer of this plot, and that he had been persecuted by Clanricard to discourage his testimony 'about the said horrid plot, which was for murdering of all the Protestants in a months time, they being twelve for one, and introducing Popery into that kingdom'. He had been forced to leave Ireland, and was in dire need: Catholics had apparently already murdered his pregnant wife. Both Essex and Shaftesbury attested to the truth of his claims.<sup>451</sup>

By this time Plunkett's execution was imminent. He petitioned for his defence to be adequately provided for in London, requesting passes for witnesses to travel to England, primarily to testify as to the dubious and criminal character of many of the witnesses against him, such as MacMoyer, Murphy, and Hetherington. He was denied

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<sup>444</sup> Anonymous newsletter, 11 June 1681 (Bodl., Carte MS 72, f. 526).

<sup>445</sup> Anonymous newsletter, 11 June 1681 (Bodl., Carte MS 72, f. 527r).

<sup>446</sup> *London Gazette*, 13-16 June 1681.

<sup>447</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 301 (16 June 1681). The witnesses in question were: John MacMoyer, Hugh Duffy, John McClave, Florence Weyer, Hugh Handland (sic), Cornelius McGiver, Bryan O'Quinn, Henry O'Neale, Phelim O'Neale, Owen O'Neale, and Owen Murphy.

<sup>448</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 302 (16 June 1681). The remaining seven accused were: Robert Ely, John Butler, Paul Strange, John Shorthall, 'Minister' Laurence Sullivan, and William Finch.

<sup>449</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 309 (23 June 1681).

<sup>450</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 216 (16 Feb. 1681).

<sup>451</sup> 'Account of James Carroll', 8 June 1681 (Charles McNeill, (ed), *The Tanner letters* (Dublin, 1943), pp 444-5).

permission to obtain copies of the various indictments made in Ireland against these individuals, but passes were issued for witnesses.<sup>452</sup> Plunkett was able to provide an affidavit by one John Plunkett (possibly a relative) that contained damaging allegations against the witnesses for the prosecution; namely, that their activities as informers were intended primarily to secure pardons and profit. One witness, Edmund Fay, claimed that he had been jailed in Dundalk, and had witnessed Hetherington invent his allegations (indeed, he had supposedly sought to involve Fay in them).<sup>453</sup>

The Vatican deemed Plunkett's salvation vital, and money was to be provided by the Church for his case.<sup>454</sup> However, the Privy Council ordered that the witnesses against Plunkett be pardoned for treason and misprision of treason; essentially the charges on which they had helped to convict Plunkett.<sup>455</sup> On Sawyer's recommendation, David and Maurice Fitzgerald were to be retained for the eventual trials of Hetherington, Dennis and MacNamara.<sup>456</sup>

Plunkett was probably beyond help at this point: some sort of public reckoning for the Irish plot was required. At the same time, with the Stuart monarchy having weathered the crisis of the previous three years, preparations were also being made to punish figures such as Hetherington who had been the architects of the allegations of the Irish plot. Plunkett was apparently offered a pardon by the Whigs in exchange for a confession that would have been priceless in propaganda terms, but he refused. Essex subsequently asked Charles to pardon Plunkett on the grounds that the evidence of the witnesses against him had been worthless, but this was refused: Charles blamed Essex for permitting Plunkett's condemnation by remaining silent at the trial, and 'I dare pardon nobody'.<sup>457</sup> Essex may have been prompted by his conscience: he later told Gilbert Burnet of Plunkett's unwillingness to get involved in politics or intrigues, in stark contrast to the 'meddling and factious' Talbot brothers.<sup>458</sup>

Overtures to York to intervene on Plunkett's behalf were presumably unsuccessful, as even as late as 28 June his mother-in-law, the duchess of Modena, was requested to intercede with York to have Plunkett's sentence commuted.<sup>459</sup> This too was unsuccessful, and on 1 July Fitzharris and Plunkett were 'drawn upon sledges to

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<sup>452</sup> 'Petition of Oliver Plunkett', 10 June 1681 (*CSPD*, 1680-81, pp 313-4).

<sup>453</sup> Plunkett to Charles II, c.17 June 1681 (*CSPD*, 1680-81, pp 317-8).

<sup>454</sup> Cibo to Tanari, 21 June 1681 (*Nunziatura di Fiandri*, viii, pp 93-4).

<sup>455</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 306 (23 June 1681).

<sup>456</sup> 'Report by Sir Roger Sawyer', 23 June 1681 (*CSPD*, 1680-81, pp 326-7).

<sup>457</sup> Cited in Brady, 'Oliver Plunkett and the Popish Plot', ii, p. 354.

<sup>458</sup> *Burnet's History of my own time*, ii, p 292.

<sup>459</sup> Tanari to Secretariate of State, 28 June 1681 (*Nunziatura di Fiandri*, ii, p. 68).

Tyburn, and there hanged and quartered according to the sentence that had been passed upon them'.<sup>460</sup> Both protested their innocence (Plunkett via a 'long harangue').<sup>461</sup> There was a cynical political motive for the execution: Charles had previously issued orders against the execution of clerics, except on his specific orders. However, Charles admitted to the French ambassador that the execution of Plunkett was an unfortunate necessity in order to maintain the credibility of the witnesses who had testified against him, and who were to be used at Shaftesbury's planned trial.<sup>462</sup> The condemnation of Fitzharris can perhaps be attributed to the same consideration. Either way, with these two executions the Popish Plot reached its zenith: the arrest of Shaftesbury days later illustrated the extent to which the monarchy and its supporters had weathered the storm. Ireland's role in the Popish Plot was over.

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<sup>460</sup> *London Gazette*, 30 June-4 July 1681.

<sup>461</sup> *The last speech and confession of Oliver Plunkett...and also of Edward Fitz-Harris: at their execution at Tyburn* (London, 1681); *The true Protestant mercury*, 29 June-2 July 1681.

<sup>462</sup> Miller, *Popery and politics in England*, p. 190; Ronald Hutton, *Charles II: King of England, Scotland and Ireland* (Oxford, 1989), pp 407-8.

## Chapter 4:

### The memory of 1641 in the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis

Memories of the Irish rebellion of 1641 were at the core of the alleged Irish plot. Indeed, the outbreak of the rebellion had a major impact upon England.<sup>463</sup> In doing so it prompted a major demand for news.<sup>464</sup> While this demand was undoubtedly manipulated (as would happen again during the Popish Plot), it was also met. Between November 1641 and June 1642 Irish events had accounted for a great deal of printed news; indeed, in February 1642 perhaps one third of George Thomason's book purchases were of material relating to Ireland.<sup>465</sup> Such an emphasis could recur, and did almost forty years later. Despite desultory attempts to exert control over the press in England by the authorities throughout the Restoration, pamphlets were an accepted element in political discourse by 1678, and in the three years following pamphlet production in Britain would double: from *circa* 1,400 to *circa* 3,000 during this period.<sup>466</sup> The manifestation of 'trade publishers', often with an ideological bent but always willing to facilitate those in search of a platform, undoubtedly assisted this. There was also the fact that parliament refused to renew the licensing act against the backdrop of the Exclusion Crisis: it lapsed on 10 June 1679, thus opening the door to a proliferation of printed works, many of which had a notably anti-Catholic theme.<sup>467</sup> There is considerable truth in Joad Raymond's contention that the arenas for the Popish Plot were the courtroom and the page.<sup>468</sup> And as seen in the case of the Irish plot, with the House of Lords standing in for a courtroom, both could overlap. 'Whether recollections were faint or non-existent, pamphlet culture reconstituted memories'.<sup>469</sup> Many of those memories, in England, were of the events of the 1640s. Hand in hand with them were the memories of perceived and actual events in Ireland at the same time, and most especially those of the rebellion, unleashed once again in print.

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<sup>463</sup> Keith J. Lindley, 'The impact of the 1641 rebellion upon England and Wales, 1641-45', *Irish Historical Studies*, 18 (1972), pp 143-76.

<sup>464</sup> David A. O'Hara, 'English newsbooks and the outbreak of the Irish rebellion of 1641', *Media History*, 9 (2003), pp 179-193.

<sup>465</sup> Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2004), pp 197-9.

<sup>466</sup> Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, p. 164, fig. 1

<sup>467</sup> Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, pp 337-40.

<sup>468</sup> Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, p. 331

<sup>469</sup> Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, p. 355

In a period of intense anti-Catholicism, further supposed evidence of Catholic perfidy from an Irish angle may have little more to offer. There was, after all, a rich vein of English anti-popery, drawing on the memory of key events (such as the defeat of the Spanish armada or the discovery of the gunpowder plot) that illustrated the persistent danger that England was in from the forces of Catholicism, as well as the fact that England had providentially been saved on such occasions. Equally, there were more tangible contemporary fears of resurgent Catholic power on the march in Europe, especially, if not exclusively, in the form of France. In 1681, in a treatise attributed to William Petty, Catholicism formed an obvious bond between France, Ireland and the Papacy, and within the argument of this tract were certain key assumptions: that there had been an attempt to wipe out Protestants in 1641; that there had indeed been a plot for a French invasion, involving the Talbots and Oliver Plunkett, and along the lines of what had been sworn to before the English parliament; that the French would be welcomed by the Irish as their saviours from the oppression of the English; and finally that another Papally sanctioned massacre of Protestants remained a distinct possibility.<sup>470</sup>

There was a straightforward logic in promoting such claims: the 1641 rebellion occupied a special place in the Protestant imaginations of both islands.<sup>471</sup> If the Popish Plot and subsequent Exclusion Crisis rested upon the assumption that a Catholic attack on Protestants in the Stuart kingdoms was imminent, then the perception of the 1641 rebellion as wholesale massacre made it the most obvious example of what this might entail. The promotion of the 'Irish plot' rested upon the assumption that a rebellion akin to that of 1641 was on the verge of recurring once more, and of being transposed to England. This was inevitably linked to the possibility of the Catholic York succeeding his brother Charles as king, thus opening the door to the restitution of Catholicism and authoritarian monarchy: Popery and arbitrary government. As manipulated in the

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<sup>470</sup> [William Petty] *The politician discovered* (London, 1681), pp 7-10.

<sup>471</sup> Walter Love, 'Civil War in Ireland: appearances in three centuries of historical writing', *Emory University Quarterly*, 22 (1966), pp 57-72; T.C. Barnard, 'The uses of 23 October 1641 and Irish Protestant celebrations' in idem, *Irish Protestant Ascents and Descents, 1641-1770* (Dublin, 2004), pp 111-4, 889-920; Aidan Clarke, 'The 1641 rebellion and anti-popery in Ireland' in Brian MacCuarta (ed) *Ulster 1641: aspects of the rising* (Belfast, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1997), pp 139-157; Donovan, "'Bloody news from Ireland'"; Ethan Howard Shagan, 'Constructing discord: ideology, propaganda, and English responses to the Irish rebellion of 1641', *Journal of British Studies*, 36 (1997), p 4-34; Kathleen M. Noonan, "'The cruell pressure of an enraged, barbarous people": Irish and English identity in seventeenth century policy and progaganda', *Historical Journal* 41 (1998), pp 151-177; Tom O'Gorman, "'Occurrences from Ireland': contemporary pamphlet reactions to the Confederate war, 1641-1649'" (M.Litt, University College Dublin, 1999); Joseph Cope, 'Fashioning victims: Dr Henry Jones and the plight of Irish Protestants, 1642', *Historical Research* 74 (2001), pp 370-91.

service of the exclusion campaign, specific concerns about the Catholic Irish were distilled from existing perceptions, newly bolstered by the information provided by the informers. This Irish evidence was harnessed to a very specific political purpose: it was intended to help effect a transformation in the nature of the English state by barring Catholics from ruling over it. In seeking to bar York from the succession, it was necessary to emphasise the dangerous implications of a Catholic monarch for the Protestants of the three kingdoms. An obvious way of doing this was to reiterate images of Catholic animosity and brutality towards Protestants, and some of the most immediately relevant examples of such activity were to be found in the perceived and actual atrocities of the 1641 rebellion. The promotion of this testimony sought to raise the imminent spectre of another, equally bloody Irish rebellion.

To a certain extent, the allegations of an Irish plot reflected long-standing if inchoate perceptions, and readily fitted into a mesh of beliefs and expectations about the Irish that retained a visceral power in this context. For example, the printed testimony of the informer James Carroll related that while speaking to a friendly local in Portumna in April 1672, Carroll heard how the same man intended to 'kill an hundred of the Protestants, Anabaptists, Independents and such like fanatic rogues'.<sup>472</sup> The pamphlet was dedicated to Essex, and had set out its stall quite bluntly from the outset: 'the Popish Irish were in an expecting readiness to give the blow, and act over their butcheries of '41, but with greater barbarity'.<sup>473</sup> Carroll claimed to have been persecuted and harassed in subsequent years by the earl of Clanrickard – Portumna was his stronghold – but eventually escaped to England. And one 'inducement of his discovery, was the bloody massacre that broke forth there in the year 1641, which will never be forgotten by the Protestants, nor ever be repented of by the Papists'.<sup>474</sup>

The claims about the existence of an Irish plot were not necessarily intended to influence opinion within parliament alone; hence their publication. The exclusion campaign had a marked popular dimension as the Whigs expanded their campaign beyond parliament and into the public arena.<sup>475</sup> However, this public campaign was in part intended to compensate for the reality that parliament could be (and was)

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<sup>472</sup> James Carrol, *A narrative of the Popish Plot in Ireland, for the murdering the Protestants there* (London, 1681), p. 1. This is summarised in John Brady, 'Some Connacht links to the Popish Plot', ii, *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, 28 (1958-9), pp 18-22.

<sup>473</sup> Carrol, *A narrative of the Popish Plot in Ireland*, A3.

<sup>474</sup> Carrol, *A narrative of the Popish Plot in Ireland*, p. 12.

<sup>475</sup> Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the reign of Charles II* (Cambridge, 1987); Knights, *Politics and opinion in crisis*, pp 153-347.

prorogued at the King's discretion, thus robbing the Whigs of the key political stage; in this respect, they were undoubtedly in a weakened position.<sup>476</sup>

Printed propaganda with such an Irish theme was simply one element of a Whig propaganda campaign that sought to keep the public aware of the more general dangers of Popery. In 1679 a collection of abstracts of the 1641 depositions (clearly inspired by Temple's work, which was republished twice in the same year<sup>477</sup>) was published in London, the preface of which reassured readers that their accuracy had been checked against the originals by no less a figure than Essex, when he had been viceroy.<sup>478</sup> The purpose of printing them was explicitly stated. They were published 'not out of any great hopes of converting Papists...but to dispose all professors of the Protestant religion to a just sense of what would have been the fruit of this instant hellish plot, had it succeeded'.<sup>479</sup> Generalised fears of Catholics, as dictated and sustained by history in accounts of Catholic brutality in England, Ireland and Europe since the Reformation, were combined with more specific fears of Catholics, as exemplified by contemporary France under Louis XIV, and potentially, by England's possible future under James Stuart.<sup>480</sup> As noted in David Fitzgerald's printed account, Protestantism in northern Europe seemed to be coming under pressure from a Catholic superpower, and that pressure might yet be extended to Britain, a Protestant island hemmed in not only by Catholic France to its south and east, but by Catholic Ireland to its west: hence the 'mentality of encirclement' noted by Jonathan Scott.<sup>481</sup> From the late sixteenth-century onwards, Ireland had been a potentially valuable asset to England's Catholic opponents on the continent.<sup>482</sup> For one Whig polemicist, 'a Tory is a monster with an English face, a French heart, and an Irish conscience'.<sup>483</sup> That conscience had been testified to in 1641, and the assumed framework of Catholic intentions remained a constant. The Protestant cause in England at this juncture was potentially in danger, and could be weakened still further (and perhaps irreparably) by the imminent accession of a

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<sup>476</sup> Miller, *Popery and politics in England*, pp 169-70.

<sup>477</sup> One of these editions, published by R. White for Samuel Gellibrand (the original publisher of the 1646 edition), was a verbatim reprint, with only minor cosmetic alterations and corrections.

<sup>478</sup> *A collection of certain horrid murders in several counties of Ireland. Committed since the 23. Of Octob. 1641* (London, 1679), A2r-A3v.

<sup>479</sup> *A collection of certain horrid murders in several counties of Ireland*, A3v.

<sup>480</sup> Harris, *Restoration*, pp 150-53.

<sup>481</sup> Scott, 'England's Troubles', p. 123.

<sup>482</sup> Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin, 'The Strategic Involvement of Continental Powers in Ireland, 1596-1691' in Padraig Lenihan (ed) *Conquest and Resistance: War in Seventeenth-Century Ireland* (Leiden, 2001), pp 25-52.

<sup>483</sup> *The character of a Tory*, (London, 1681), p. 1.

Catholic monarch. The combination of fears about Ireland and France, as seen in Fitzgerald's testimony, was part of a broader campaign that sought to secure an exclusively Protestant succession. And an obvious tactic to prevent this was to whip up fears of Catholicism to, quite literally, crisis point.

The events of the 1641 rebellion were inevitably (and extensively) reiterated in print. Alongside such grisly depictions of the events were the printed accounts of those such as the Irish witnesses that claimed to reveal the machinations of a plot that would culminate in a rerun of 1641. The structure of these two types of account dovetailed neatly. One suggested history repeating itself; the other provided the history. For the unconvinced, a pamphlet such as *An account of the bloody massacre in Ireland* could end with a useful exhortation: 'see more of such cruelties in Clarke's Martyrology'.<sup>484</sup> Following this advice, one finds a virtually identical account of 1641 cast within a master narrative of the sufferings inflicted upon the professors of the true – reformed – faith.<sup>485</sup> The Catholic threat was perceived as being of long duration, and the Popish Plot could be slotted into a chronological pattern of Catholic persecution culminating in Ireland on 23 October 1641 with the outbreak of the rebellion intended 'not to leave a drop of English blood in Ireland, and so consequently not the least spark or glimpse of gospel and pure Protestant religion'.<sup>486</sup> The same examples of Protestant suffering would be reiterated in a very different pamphlet: 'We may call Popery a bloody religion, if at least we may afford the name of religion to a thing made up of idolatry, usurpation, and cruelty'.<sup>487</sup> And for the most horrendous examples of such cruelty

We need not look any further back than the present age: in the rebellion of Ireland wherein there were more than three hundred thousand innocent Protestants destroyed, and this in a base treacherous manner, without any provocation [;] no age, sex, or quality being privileged from massacres and lingering deaths, by being robbed, stripped naked, and so exposed to perish by cold and famine, or else suddenly hanged, their throats cut, drowned in rivers, bogs and ditches, or else murdered with exquisite torture: wives ravished before their husbands faces, children forced to hang up their own parents, others compelled against their consciences to own the Romish superstitions, and swear thereunto in hopes to save their lives, and presently murdered, as if they designed to destroy souls as well as bodies: and such beastly cruelties

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<sup>484</sup> *An account of the bloody massacre in Ireland*, p. 8.

<sup>485</sup> Samuel Clarke, *A generall martyrologie, containing a collection of all the greatest persecutions which have befallen the Church of Christ, from the creation to our present time* (London, 1651), pp 347-63.

<sup>486</sup> *A brief account of the several plots, conspiracies and hellish attempts of the bloody-minded papists...* (London, 1679), pp 10-13, 29.

<sup>487</sup> *A brief narrative of the several Popish treasons and cruelties against the Protestants in England, France, and Ireland* (London, [1678]), p. 1.



acted as the most barbarous heathens would blush to practise. All which being acted within these 40 years, I hope is not yet, nor ever will be forgot.<sup>488</sup>

This author was explicitly seeking to remind an audience that this was precisely what Protestants could expect at the hands of the Papists, and he sought to do so precisely because such things were supposedly at hand again, in the form of an even worse Catholic plot that was prefaced by the murder (by Catholics) of Edmund Bury Godfrey.<sup>489</sup>

Memories of 1641 were precisely that: memories, based upon the records of the Protestant experience of the rebellion recounted in the depositions taken from witnesses in the aftermath, and which had entered public discourse in the works of figures such as Sir John Temple. Certain incidents recounted in *An account of the bloody massacre in Ireland* (while embellished and exaggerated) substantively derived from witness testimony, and working back through time, one can see the continuity. Take, for example, the mutilation of the clergyman in Kilkenny. In the pamphlet discussed above the severed heads of numerous Protestants were taken by the Irish, most notably that of 'a reverend minister' which (along with the rest) was 'set upon the market-cross on a market-day; triumphing, slashing, and mangling them: they put a gag in the ministers mouth, slit up his cheeks to his ears, and laid a leaf of a Bible upon it, and bid him, *preach, for his mouth is wide enough*'.<sup>490</sup> In Temple over thirty years earlier (citing the contemporary testimony of one William Lucas) the head of the minister, 'one Master Bingham' (and the others) is taken by the Irish, who 'set them up on the market-cross on a market-day, and that the rebels slashed, stabbed and mangled those heads, put a gag or carret [sic] in the said Master Bingham's mouth, slit up his cheeks to his ears, laying a leaf of a Bible before him, and bid him preach, for his mouth was wide enough'.<sup>491</sup> And in another contemporary testimony, the deposition of one Joseph Wheeler, the minister, Thomas Bingham, was decapitated with a number of others. Their heads 'were brought out and set upon the market-cross' in Kilkenny and mutilated, before the rebels 'put a gag in the mouth of the said Mr Bingham the

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<sup>488</sup> *A brief narrative of the several Popish treasons and cruelties*, pp 4-5.

<sup>489</sup> *A brief narrative of the several Popish treasons and cruelties*, p. 5.

<sup>490</sup> *An accompt of the bloody massacre in Ireland*, p. 5.

<sup>491</sup> Temple, *Irish Rebellion* (1646), p. 106.

minister and laying the leaf of a bible before him bade him preach saying his mouth was wide enough'.<sup>492</sup>

Admittedly, neither Lucas nor Wheeler actually witnessed this; like many deponents, they had simply repeated hearsay evidence. Yet the similarity between the two is such that it seems reasonable to assume that both men referred to an actual event; presumably then, this was indeed the unfortunate Mr. Bingham's fate. The deposition utilised by Temple was seemingly corroborated by another deposition, and eventually the story would end up in the pamphlet. There was an evident continuity between the contemporary perceptions, but the blunt and stark representation in the pamphlet of 1678 left no room for ambiguity about what had supposedly happened. The Irish threat perceived during the Popish Plot derived strength and credence from memory, and the assumption of a re-run of the events of 1641, though the crisis inevitably tapped into more material concerns. There would, in time, be a pamphlet debate about the witnesses. Yet such as it was, this essentially dealt with the veracity or otherwise of the witnesses themselves, not the underlying assumptions upon which they had based their case. Those assumptions had not abated. The fear of another Irish rebellion remained and was real, corresponding as it did to the pattern of previous decades; the possibility of another attempted massacre could stand alone without a definite purpose. But in the minds of many in both Britain and Ireland, the possibility was no less real for that.

The Popish Plot also saw the publication of a second account of the 1641 rebellion: that of Edmund Borlase.<sup>493</sup> Like Jones and Temple before him, Borlase had devoted great attention to the depositions of the witnesses that his predecessors had drawn on.<sup>494</sup> He had also sought material from other sources. The contemporary resonance of such a work as this was attested to by one anonymous correspondent who informed Borlase in February 1679 that Ormond, Clanricard and John Fitzpatrick 'are the devils we more fear than all those in hell, or all those [on] earth besides'.<sup>495</sup> His history was in production by May 1679, and was apparently in print by August 1679,

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<sup>492</sup> Deposition of Joseph Wheeler (TCD MS 812, f. 203). This is reproduced in Temple, *Irish Rebellion*, pp 129-33

<sup>493</sup> Edmund Borlase, *The history of the execrable Irish rebellion trac'd from many preceding acts to the grand eruption the 23 of October 1641* (London, 1680).

<sup>494</sup> The lists of depositions compiled by Borlase are in BL Sloane MS 1,008, ff 132-45. This corresponds to the printed version in the *History*.

<sup>495</sup> BL Sloane MS 1,008, f. 197.

but its commercial sale was delayed.<sup>496</sup> Another correspondent expressed his hope that it would be published while the English parliament was in session; a pregnant suggestion implying that it might be instructive to the members of either house.<sup>497</sup> The text was being circulated by September 1679, when John Tillotson wrote to Borlase acknowledging the receipt of a book 'which I am now reading with great pleasure and satisfaction', and congratulated him on his 'compiling a work so seasonable at this present time, and so useful to posterity'.<sup>498</sup> According to Dudley Loftus, it was recommended from the pulpit of St Patrick's Cathedral in October 1679 in front of a presumably uncomfortable Ormond during the annual 23 October sermon commemorating the rebellion.<sup>499</sup> There was considerable interest in the work in late 1679, and John Temple observed to Borlase that 'the greatest fault I have found with your book, hath been, that there is no more of it'.<sup>500</sup> However, such opinions were in a minority, as the book was poorly received: Borlase 'wrote badly and failed to provide full coverage of the topic he undertook', and his history was not a commercial success.<sup>501</sup> The publisher, Robert Clavell, sent 26 copies to Dublin in late 1679 but expected most of them back.<sup>502</sup> However it seems that there were preparations for a second edition. The text was submitted to Roger Lestrangle in his capacity as licencer of the press, and he requested certain alterations 'to clear the King of the outrages in Ireland'; Lestrangle claimed that he had been told some years previously not to licence any works on Irish history without the approval of Ormond, and other senior figures.<sup>503</sup> It seems clear that Borlase intended to reinsert such material (presumably because of the lapse in the licensing act), including the alleged commission from Charles I to the Irish rebels in 1641, further assertions of the inherent cruelty of the Irish prior to the rebellion, and allegations that Charles had been willing to 'aid himself out of Ireland against the parliament'.<sup>504</sup> Such reinsertions would have heightened the relevance of Borlase's work to an English audience at this juncture by conjuring fears of the

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<sup>496</sup> Royce McGillivray, 'Edmund Borlase, Historian of the Irish Rebellion', *Studia Hibernica*, 11 (1969), p. 89.

<sup>497</sup> BL Sloane MS 1,008, f. 199.

<sup>498</sup> John Tillotson to Borlase, 2 Sept 1679 (BL Sloane MS 1,008, f. 210).

<sup>499</sup> Dudley Loftus to Borlase, 25 Oct 1679 (BL Sloane MS 1,008, f. 226).

<sup>500</sup> John Temple to Borlase, 31 Jan 1680 (BL Sloane MS 1,008, f. 253).

<sup>501</sup> McGillivray, 'Edmund Borlase', p. 89.

<sup>502</sup> McGillivray, 'Edmund Borlase', pp 90-91.

<sup>503</sup> BL Stowe MS 82, f. 1. This is an annotated edition of the original printed text.

<sup>504</sup> BL Stowe MS 82, ff 52, 63, 68.

Catholic Irish, and the Stuarts supposed affinity with them, but no second edition was ever published.

Borlase received at least some assistance from another putative historian with whom he would later be associated: Anglesey, who had passed material to Borlase via the former Jesuit Andrew Sall, and who in April 1680 expressed his pleasure with the text to Borlase. He made a point of observing how the possibility of the recurrence of the 1641 rebellion remained a real concern, given the 'wolvish' nature of the Irish. 'Nothing can contribute more effectually then by the truth of history to undeceive that ignorant and unhappy people, and to let them see how they have been seduced to their ruin', even if they were 'the most barbarous though the most entirely subdued nation in Christendom'.<sup>505</sup> In 1677 Anglesey had recorded his conviction that 'it were worthwhile and of great use against the Papists to make a volume abstracting all their chief lying wonders and falsehoods to entertain children with in winter nights with a good preface before it shewing their vanity and falsehood'.<sup>506</sup>

However, the possibility of being destroyed at the hands of the same Papists may have altered his literary ambitions: Anglesey would also seek to join the ranks of authors recounting the events of 1641. In 1669 he had drawn up a plan for an intended book 'concerning the King's ecclesiastical jurisdiction and showing the ruin of Ireland by not extirpating the Pope's jurisdiction there'.<sup>507</sup> On 22 January 1680 he recorded how he 'spent all day at home in the history of Ireland which I resolve now to go on with and first to dispatch that part of it since the rebellion'.<sup>508</sup> He subsequently sought to fulfil this ambition by assembling materials for a history of Ireland that he embarked upon in early 1681, and in doing so relied heavily on the published work of Temple (and others) as a source.<sup>509</sup> His history was never published, and such sections as were completed were seemingly lost, but while his structure began with the Anglo-Norman conquest in the twelfth century, it placed a great emphasis on the events of the 1640s. The projected history had a tripartite structure, of which this section was to be the last, but it was Anglesey's intention to publish this before the rest; an indication of the importance he attached to the events of that decade. The section that was to deal with

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<sup>505</sup> Anglesey to Borlase, 17 April 1680 (BL Sloane MS 1008, f. 262).

<sup>506</sup> BL Add MS 18,370, f. 1.

<sup>507</sup> W.H.Bliss, W. Dunn Macray, O. Ogle, & F.J. Routledge (eds), *Calendar of the Clarendon State Papers preserved in the Bodleian Library* (5 vols, Oxford, 1872-1970, v, p. 633.

<sup>508</sup> BL Add MS 18,370, f. 65.

<sup>509</sup> BL Add MS 4,816; Herbert Wood, 'Memorandum on the Earl of Anglesey's notes for a history of Ireland', *Analecta Hibernica*, 12 (1943), pp 175-6.

1640s drew on four principal sources: an unspecified work of Peter Walsh, Henry Jones's *Remonstrance*, and the histories of the rebellion by Temple and Borlase.<sup>510</sup> Anglesey's notes indicate precisely where the documentary material culled from the latter two works was to be inserted.<sup>511</sup> Admittedly, quoting Temple and Borlase was probably more convenient than seeking the original sources, but his willingness to use their work is indicative of their value as sourcebooks as much as histories; the links between Temple's work and the depositions have been noted.<sup>512</sup> However, Temple did not create the massacre paradigm; that was evident in pamphlets immediately after the outbreak of the rebellion. In 1641 a London pamphlet observed how the Catholic Irish 'have shed abundance of English blood, and have vowed to destroy all the Protestants now living in Ireland'.<sup>513</sup> They had been instructed by the Pope to massacre 'heretics', and Catholics were implored to 'study your brains daily, to invent instruments of torture',<sup>514</sup> for 'the rebels tyranny is great, that they put both man, woman and child (that are Protestants) to the sword, not sparing either age, degree, sex or their reputation'.<sup>515</sup> The perception of the rebellion as a massacre of Protestants was nothing new.

The 1641 rebellion was the single most notorious sequence of violence in a remarkably violent era across the three Stuart kingdoms. The prominence accorded it in England stemmed from the spectre it presented of a re-run of its events and their consequences, in a manner that would directly impinge upon English (and Irish) Protestants. The Popish Plot drew strength and credence from the fear of Catholics prevalent across the Stuart kingdoms, not just England. Without an awareness and fear of any prospective 'Irish plot', why were claims about such a plot promoted? The Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis undoubtedly had an impact upon Ireland, but Ireland had also played a role within these events as they unfolded in England. The spectres of 1641 and the supposedly murderous intentions of the Catholic Irish, as hinted at in the claims of the informers, tapped into older and deeper fears: in England, of Catholicism from without; in Ireland, from within. These fears were highlighted by the allegations about the Irish plot. However, what was the reality of events in Ireland at this time?

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<sup>510</sup> BL Add Ms 4,816, f. 15.

<sup>511</sup> BL Add Ms 4,816, ff 20-24.

<sup>512</sup> Love, 'Civil War in Ireland', pp 58, 64-7.

<sup>513</sup> *The last news from Ireland* (London, 1641), np.

<sup>514</sup> *Still worse news from Ireland* (London, 1641), np.

<sup>515</sup> *The Irish petition to the parliament in England* (London, 1641), np.

## **Part 2:**

### **Problems of Restoration: Ireland, 1660-1678**

## Chapter 5:

### Anti-Popery in Ireland: a structural prejudice?

The distinction between Ireland's role in the Popish Plot and the impact of the Popish Plot on Ireland is one of perception as opposed to reality. But there was a common, if inchoate, bond between Ireland and England in the form of a singular set of beliefs.

What emerged in England as the Popish Plot was simply the latest example in a long tradition of anti-Catholicism in both islands. Anti-Popery was a vital element of the mental world of Protestants in early modern Britain and Ireland. In England, this tradition could be easily traced back to the Henrician reformation, and was nurtured throughout the next one hundred and fifty years by books such as Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* and by events as diverse as the Marian persecution, the defeat of the Spanish armada in 1588, the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, and the various controversies of the reign of Charles I, up to and including the Civil Wars themselves.<sup>516</sup> By the 1670s, it had been further bolstered by the weakened position of European Protestantism after the Thirty Years War, and the emergence of the reinvigorated Catholic superpower that was Louis XIV's France.<sup>517</sup>

To English Protestant eyes, by the late 1670s England was faced by a major and international Catholic threat, spearheaded by the French.<sup>518</sup> But the French were not the only elements of this. There was the adjacent island of Ireland. Arguably, Ireland had always played a role in English anti-Catholicism; from the rebellion of James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald, and the later manoeuvring of Hugh O'Neill with both the Papacy and the Spanish during the Nine Years War in the late sixteenth century, to the fears prompted by the raising of an Irish army by the lord deputy, Thomas Wentworth, in 1639-41, Ireland always had a role to play within the fears of English Protestants. Its overwhelmingly Catholic population guaranteed that anti-Popery would retain a

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<sup>516</sup> Peter Lake, 'Anti-Popery: the structure of a prejudice' in Richard Cust & Ann Hughes (eds), *Conflict in early Stuart England: studies in religion and politics, 1603-1642* (London, 1989), pp 72-106; David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (London, 1990); Brenda Buchanan (ed), *Gunpowder Plots* (London, 2005).

<sup>517</sup> Miller, *Popery and politics in England*, pp 67-90; K.H.D. Haley, "'No Popery'" in the reign of Charles II' in J.S. Bromley & E.H. Kossman (eds), *Britain and the Netherlands, v: some political mythologies* (The Hague, 1975), pp 102-119.

<sup>518</sup> Bosher, 'The Franco-Catholic Danger' *passim*; Pincus, 'From butterboxes to wooden shoes', *passim*.

particular potency and relevance both in Ireland, and also amongst those in England who observed Ireland. Indeed, one of the key aspects of Ireland within the Popish Plot, to English eyes, would be the promotion of Irish witnesses whose evidence ostensibly confirmed the plot. From 1680 onwards attempts were made by figures such as Shaftesbury to promote allegations that a Catholic rebellion in Ireland was imminent. In an atmosphere of intense anti-Catholicism, this was bound to be an issue, and Shaftesbury would spearhead the campaign to exclude the Catholic James, duke of York, from the succession; English fears were further accentuated by the reality that the legitimate heir to the English throne was a Catholic, and scare mongering about Ireland was meant to amplify anti-Catholic paranoia in England, and thereby strengthen the exclusion campaign directed at York. The Catholic Irish were supposedly ready to rise, with the intention of massacring Ireland's Protestants. The French would then land in Ireland, and the combined Franco-Irish force would attack England to embark upon a similar massacre of English Protestants. To add credence to these claims, obscure and dubious figures would be persuaded to come from Ireland and testify before the English parliament in November 1680 that an 'Irish plot' – a Catholic plot – did in fact exist. That this ostensible plot involved the outbreak of a rebellion in Ireland was in itself a plausible claim, for given the levels of violence in early modern Ireland, it was understandable that it was seen by some to retain a potential for more. Given that these witnesses testified to the English House of Lords in an environment of visceral anti-Catholicism, such claims about Ireland were bound to be of some relevance to an English audience. While England itself lacked an appropriate model for what Catholic rebellion or invasion might actually entail, Ireland could provide one: specifically in the form of the 1641 rebellion, which resonated in the Protestant imaginations of both Ireland and England as the obvious benchmark for what Irish Catholics might potentially do should they ever have the chance. And while such genuine fears of Irish Catholics undoubtedly existed, they could readily be manipulated in the service of a factional or political cause.

However, there was also a specifically Irish tradition of anti-Popery, which, while undoubtedly influenced by the stock imagery and rhetoric of British anti-Popery, derived its potency from the structural reality that Protestants in Ireland remained a minority in a country that had been wracked by warfare in the 1640s and 1650s, warfare that had begun with the outbreak of rebellion in 1641, 'wherin the force of



religion was so much greater than that of birth'.<sup>519</sup> The Protestant nature of the British colonial presence in Ireland prior to 1641 inevitably ensured a sectarian dimension in Irish society. This had been evident from the late sixteenth century onwards, and the basis for Anglican hostility to Catholicism had long been enshrined in the theology of the Church of Ireland.<sup>520</sup> However, popular attitudes outside the Anglican clerical elite, especially in the later seventeenth century, may well have been influenced less by doctrinal considerations than by a visceral sectarian distinction between generally Catholic native and generally Protestant – both Anglican and Presbyterian – newcomer, especially after the brutal events of the 1640s.<sup>521</sup> Regardless of theology, the blunt reality was that in 1641 the Catholic Irish engaged in what eventually became a nationwide rebellion that was essentially directed at Protestant colonists. Whilst the fury of the dispossessed Irish was undoubtedly directed at those who were seen to have dispossessed them, a brutal sectarian edge was evident in the assault upon the colonists. To give but one example, witness the anonymous Irish rebel in Armagh in 1641, who reportedly 'opening the sacred Bible pissed on the same saying I could do worse with it if I could'.<sup>522</sup> It is obvious what he meant; the actions and words display contempt (at the very least) for the King James Bible as the medium for the religion adhered to by the British colonists. Such contempt was directed not merely at the objects that exemplified Protestant denominations, but also at those who professed the reformed faiths.

Virtually since its outbreak, the 1641 rebellion was rightly assumed to be a defining moment in Irish history. But what actually happened to Protestants in the rebellion? The perception was that they had been subjected to an unmitigated and brutally sectarian onslaught, and had narrowly escaped extermination in often horrendous ways. The most recent and substantive study readily identifies the basis for such Protestant fears, outlining the extent of violence against the settlers, and its politicised and ritualistic nature.<sup>523</sup> But the sheer extent of the assault across the country was undoubtedly exaggerated; the polemical estimation of Protestant casualties

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<sup>519</sup> John Gibney, 'Select document: A discourse of Ireland, 1695', forthcoming in *Irish Historical Studies*.

<sup>520</sup> Alan Ford, *The Protestant Reformation in Ireland, 1590-1641* (Frankfurt, 1985), pp 217-28.

<sup>521</sup> A valuable introduction to the broad issue of sectarianism in Ireland prior to 1641 is Alan Ford, 'Living together and living apart: sectarianism in early modern Ireland' in Alan Ford & John McCafferty (eds), *The origins of sectarianism in early modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2005), pp 1-23.

<sup>522</sup> Cited in Raymond Gillespie, *Reading Ireland: Print, Reading and Social Change in Early Modern Ireland* (Manchester, 2005), p. 19.

<sup>523</sup> Canny, *Making Ireland British*, pp 461-550.

afterwards could range between 10,000 and 1,000,000.<sup>524</sup> Did reciprocal attacks by settlers against the Irish receive significant attention? This seems unlikely. For instance, some of the accounts cited above mention the drowning of Protestants in Portadown. This happened at least once, with *circa* 100 killed, but that this was in revenge for a devastating attack by settlers on Lisnagarvey is not mentioned; one is left with a monopoly of suffering.<sup>525</sup> The atrocity stories published in the aftermath, and decades later, emphasised the supposed lack of provocation, or of a rationale, for the attacks upon Protestants. The published accounts of the rebellion that emerged in the seventeenth century often borrowed their details wholesale from a handful of works, such as Sir John Temple's substantial *Irish Rebellion*. Temple had been the Irish Master of the Rolls, whose proven militancy in the aftermath of the 1641 rebellion had guaranteed his imprisonment in 1643 for opposing the cessation of that year, and had influenced his subsequent gravitation towards parliament. Oft cited, his history lurks in the background of much modern historiography on the events of the 1640s, and the later seventeenth century in general. Yet it rarely seems to receive adequate scholarly attention.<sup>526</sup> As things stand, this neglect may stem from the fact that, as its title suggests, Temple's book was fairly straightforward, and perhaps requires little further explanation. Indeed, one of the rare attempts to examine it remains unconvincing precisely because Temple cannot bear the weight of expectation and assumption demanded.<sup>527</sup> The more convincing, albeit brief, attention given to it by Toby Barnard pithily defines its relevance in providing the 'circumstantial detail and explanatory framework' to perpetuate a Protestant perspective on 1641 (specifically via the medium of commemorative sermons); perhaps there is little more to be said.<sup>528</sup> On the other hand, the relative neglect of Temple by modern historians may stem from the dictates of the professional study of history, wherein Temple's *Rebellion* is an anachronism, for its composition is explicitly and intimately linked to the events of the 1640s. It is a deeply polemical work, and has been recognised as such virtually since its publication. Temple had written it to exert an influence, but in doing so he wrote a work that in itself became a part of history, as Temple's *Rebellion* came to stand alone over time. Its

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<sup>524</sup> Donovan, 'Bloody news from Ireland', pp 28-39.

<sup>525</sup> Canny, *Making Ireland British*, pp 484-5.

<sup>526</sup> A recent exception is Raymond Gillespie, 'Temple's fate: reading *The Irish Rebellion* in late seventeenth-century Ireland' in Ciaran Brady & Jane Ohlmeyer (eds), *British Interventions in Early Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2005), pp 315-333.

<sup>527</sup> Noonan, 'The cruel pressure of an enraged, barbarous people', *passim*.

<sup>528</sup> Toby Barnard, 'The uses of the 23rd of October 1641 and Irish Protestant celebrations', p. 113.

relevance became divorced from the circumstances of its composition. His work is less history than historical artefact, but in such a reading, the purpose of *The Irish Rebellion* gives it its significance.

The purpose of Temple's work was set out in its preface, which was, by definition, the framework within which his account was cast. His purpose was straightforward: to reveal to readers 'the sad story of our miseries'.<sup>529</sup> In his preface Temple had placed great emphasis on the veracity and variety of the evidence that he sought to present, and readily cast himself in the role of 'public informer'.<sup>530</sup>

With a resolution most clearly to declare the truth...All that I aim at is, that there may remain for the benefit of this present age, as well as of posterity, some certain records and monuments of the first beginnings and fatal progress of this rebellion, together with the horrid cruelties most unmercifully exercised by the Irish rebels upon the British, and Protestants within this kingdom of Ireland.<sup>531</sup>

It is debatable to what extent Temple himself set an agenda for future Protestant analyses of Ireland and the Irish, or whether he was simply reiterating a point of view that would be repeated over time. Certainly, he provided 'the raw material from which Protestant memories were shaped and reshaped over generations'<sup>532</sup> by printing large numbers of extracts from witness accounts of the rebellion, and thus provided raw material for future generations of polemicists. He was no advocate of persuasion or conciliation with regard to the Catholic Irish; rather, he suggested 'a wall of separation betwixt the English and the Irish'<sup>533</sup> as a preventative measure to ensure that future generations of Protestants in Ireland might be saved from a recurrence of the events of the rebellion. He referred to the basis of his work in the testimony provided by the witness depositions collected in the aftermath, amongst other authorities; again, his emphasis was on veracity. He also observed that the testimonies were 'most commonly decried, and held by the Irish as very injurious to their countrymen.'<sup>534</sup> This revealed an awareness of two things. Firstly, that there was some knowledge of the existence of these depositions (selections had, after all, been presented to the English parliament). Secondly, that their polemical value was not lost on contemporary observers. But

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<sup>529</sup> Temple, *Irish Rebellion*, preface, A2v.

<sup>530</sup> Temple, *Irish Rebellion*, preface, A3v.

<sup>531</sup> Temple, *Irish Rebellion*, preface, A3r.

<sup>532</sup> Gillespie, 'Temple's fate', p. 333.

<sup>533</sup> Temple, *Irish Rebellion*, preface, A3r.

<sup>534</sup> Temple, *Irish Rebellion*, preface, A4r.

Temple's own definition of their purpose was revealing: 'to provide some general account of the losses suffered by the British, and the cruelties exercised by the Irish'.<sup>535</sup> His claim that many of the deponents died soon after presenting their testimony seemed to intensify their veracity; the depositions stood as their final testament, and as a valediction. There were good reasons to be adamant on this point. Any doctoring of the record, to remove awkward realities, would inevitably have implications for the future, as the rebels would seek to 'palliate their rebellion...under the name of a holy and just war'.<sup>536</sup> He explicitly rejected any basis for Catholic grievances, such as were contained in the remonstrance of grievances presented by the Confederate Catholics to Royalist negotiators at Trim in 1643. This had outlined Catholic grievances while placing the blame for the outbreak of the rebellion firmly upon the Dublin administration of which Temple had been a member, so it is perhaps unsurprising that he should have dismissed it.<sup>537</sup> Indeed, he went so far as to claim that it had been intended

To gain belief among foreign states abroad, as well as discontented powers at home; and so draw assistance and aid, to foment and strengthen their rebellious party in Ireland...So certainly the quality of all humane actions is best understood, and most clearly discerned, when we look upon them as they appear in their first original, before the inconveniences and fatal miscarriages which afterwards come to be discovered, awake the first projectors, and teach them new artifices wherewith to disguise and colour over their abortive, or otherwise unfortunate counsels.<sup>538</sup>

He expanded upon some of these themes in the actual text, while introducing other elements. In explaining the evident hostility of the Irish towards the English, he emphasised religion, intertwined with ethnicity; civility and religion were in this way inextricably linked.<sup>539</sup> He adopted a claim first made by Giraldus Cambrensis that the suffering of the Irish was due to the wrath of God, in punishment for their sinfulness; and in such a reading the English became the instruments of God's wrath.<sup>540</sup> The savage and barbarous nature of the Irish, and their unremitting hostility to the English, was a running theme in his narrative as it approached its terminal date of 1641, and he

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<sup>535</sup> Temple, *Irish Rebellion*, preface, A4r.

<sup>536</sup> Temple, *Irish Rebellion*, preface, B1r.

<sup>537</sup> The remonstrance is discussed in Micheál Ó Siochrú, *Confederate Ireland, 1642-1649: A Constitutional and political Analysis* (Dublin, 1999), pp 62-3.

<sup>538</sup> Temple, *Irish Rebellion*, preface, B2v.

<sup>539</sup> Temple, *Irish Rebellion*, p. 5.

<sup>540</sup> Temple, *Irish Rebellion*, p. 6.

seemed to implicitly concede that this loathing was mutual.<sup>541</sup> However, he painted a rosy picture of forty years of relative peace and harmony prior to the outbreak of the rebellion, that on the one hand eroded any basis for claiming that the rebellion had its origins in anything other than the savagery of the Irish, while on the other set the scene for the brutality he sought to describe, as presented in the evidence of the rebellion's Protestant victims.

Exploiting the access to documentary material offered by his official position, he almost certainly composed his work to bolster the prospective reconquest of Ireland by the parliamentarian viceroy Philip Sidney, Viscount Lisle.<sup>542</sup> There is a parallel here with the earlier *Remonstrance* of Henry Jones, which had been written to secure assistance for Protestant survivors of the rebellion from a sceptical and parsimonious English parliament by providing evidence of their sufferings.<sup>543</sup> Both works were written at specific junctures, and for specific purposes. But more importantly, both works employed the extensive witness testimonies collected after 1641: the depositions that have preoccupied historians ever since.<sup>544</sup> Structurally, *The Irish Rebellion* is an unwieldy and disjointed work, but its ideological and physical core was to be found in the depositions Temple used to write it, and printed within it. Alongside these depositions, Temple's *Rebellion* was liberally studded with various other kinds of documentary evidence. He stressed the veracity of his account, as was supposedly evident in the stark presentation of this evidence, and he emphasised the basis of his work in the testimonies provided by the depositions that he had recourse to, whether as copies or originals.<sup>545</sup> As perpetuated within print culture, over time such visceral depictions would gain a cumulative effect. When stripped of the complexity of its background, the technical reality of a rebellion against a colony was that the battle lines inevitably adopted a religious tinge. In time then 1641 could be depicted as a purely religious war, and its events would retain a resonance for generations. Protestant political argument in the decades after the event became predicated on the fact that they remained an embattled minority, endangered in Ireland and aware that they had come under attack in the past.

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<sup>541</sup> Temple, *Irish Rebellion*, p. 7.

<sup>542</sup> John Adamson, 'Straffords ghost: the British context of Viscount Lisle's lieutenancy of Ireland' in Ohlmeyer (ed), *Ireland from Independence to Occupation*, pp 138-40.

<sup>543</sup> Henry Jones, *A remonstrance of divers remarkable passages concerning the Church and Kingdom of Ireland* (London, 1642). This is discussed in Cope, 'Fashioning victims', *passim*.

<sup>544</sup> Aidan Clarke, 'The 1641 depositions' in Peter Fox (ed), *Treasures of the library, Trinity College Dublin* (Dublin, 1986), pp 111-22.

<sup>545</sup> Gillespie, 'Temple's fate', pp 325-6.

The atrocities directed at Protestants during the rebellion, both real and exaggerated, loomed large in the memory and imagination of the Irish Protestant community. Given the fact that the most significant consequence of the wars of mid-century had been the crystallisation of a nascent Protestant 'ascendancy', in an Irish context the utility of anti-Catholicism in political and social life would inevitably (and by definition) be at the expense of Catholics. Yet equally, there was a vigorous tradition of Catholic refutation of such assertions. Predicated ultimately on questions of Catholic loyalty and an accommodation with a Protestant state, the Catholic position could be defended in numerous ways. One anonymous tract, published in 1662, was prompted by the publication of Protestant atrocity stories of 1641 and its aftermath, intended as they were 'to render all the Catholics there (in all good men's opinions) blasted and unfit to partake of his Majesties grace and favour'.<sup>546</sup> It sought to refute such claims, balancing them against atrocities committed by English forces. This was one means of defence from vilification, but there were others. John Lynch wrote an elaborate history to counter English views of the barbarity of the Irish.<sup>547</sup> Peter Walsh sought to emphasise the loyalty of Catholics to the crown.<sup>548</sup> Nicholas French, in numerous works, bluntly rebutted the allegations made against Catholics since the 1640s.<sup>549</sup> Yet the anonymous pamphlet mentioned above was exceptional in its subject matter in two ways. Firstly, the bulk of such pro-Catholic publications were large, sophisticated works written by the Catholic elite, particularly the clergy, usually printed on the continent, and effectively accessible only to the wealthy and the learned.<sup>550</sup> Printing restrictions kept them out of Ireland, and while smuggling was an option they were difficult to get into the country.<sup>551</sup> However, there were links that could overcome Ireland's printing restrictions to ensure the supply and dissemination of books. They were readily available in most Irish coastal towns by the 1680s, especially in the east and southeast. Commercial and ecclesiastical networks facilitated their spread, and in any case London editions could be reprinted in Dublin. Throughout the seventeenth century, increases in literacy, and consequently increasing demands for reading

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<sup>546</sup> 'R.S.', *A collection of some of the murthers and massacres committd on the Irish in Ireland since the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October 1641* (London, 1662), p. 6.

<sup>547</sup> John Lynch, *Cambrensis Eversus*, Matthew Kelly (ed) (2 vols, Dublin, 1848)

<sup>548</sup> Peter Walsh, *The history and vindication of the loyal formulary, or Irish remonstance..*(London?, 1674).

<sup>549</sup> Nicholas French, *The historical works of the right Rev. Nicholas French* (2 vols, Dublin, 1846).

<sup>550</sup> T.C. Barnard, "Parlour entertainment in an evening?" Histories of the 1640s' in Micheál Ó Siochrú (ed), *Kingdoms in crisis: Ireland in the 1640s* (Dublin, 2001), pp 30-3.

<sup>551</sup> Mary Pollard, *Dublin's trade in books, 1550-1800* (Oxford, 1989), pp 11-16.

material, was bound to widen the reach of the printed word.<sup>552</sup> Alongside this was the intangible reality of oral culture, of communal reading, rumour, gossip, and hearsay, and reading aloud would also bring the contents of books to a greater audience, and this can be extended to other printed media.<sup>553</sup> For example, numerous proclamations issued in Ireland during the Popish Plot in 1678-9 dealt with issues such as the presence of Catholic clergy, Catholics within towns, and Catholic ownership of weapons.<sup>554</sup> Inevitably reminders of the potential danger posed by Catholics, such proclamations were seen, read, and heard in public. Oral communication and rumour filled the gaps between the literate. It could easily underpin the memory of the events of 1641. Beyond this, admittedly, was the bardic tradition and oral culture of Gaelic Ireland (encompassing the bulk of the island's population), which employed history, providence and memory in markedly different ways.<sup>555</sup> But within print culture, pro-Catholic writers were vastly outnumbered by publications propagating a Protestant view of 1641 as unmitigated sectarian massacre. This was an aspect of explicitly Irish Protestant memory.

Other consequences of the post-1660 realignment were the subsequent disputations between opposing versions of Irish history that readily underpinned political argument, and more often than not dealt with the crucial decade of the 1640s.<sup>556</sup> Literature generated by lived experience would give way in time to political argument and prescription whose authority was assumed to derive from Irish history, and the role of key (and living) actors within it. Such works as were written and published in the second half of the seventeenth century, after the Restoration, were undoubtedly diverse. Yet despite their varied subject matter, many of them reflected

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<sup>552</sup> Toby Barnard, 'Learning, the learned and literacy in Ireland, c.1660-1760' in Toby Barnard, Dáibhí Ó Cróinín & Katherine Simms (eds), *A miracle of learning: studies in manuscripts and Irish learning* (Aldershot, 1998), pp 209-35; Raymond Gillespie, 'The circulation of print in seventeenth-century Ireland' in *Studia Hibernica*, 29 (1995-7), pp 31-58; idem, *Reading Ireland*.

<sup>553</sup> Oral culture, rumour and the dissemination of news in Ireland have not been systematically studied as of yet. However, the work of Adam Fox on early modern England provides useful models: Adam Fox, 'Rumour, news and popular political opinion in Elizabethan and early Stuart England', *Historical Journal*, 40, (1997), pp 597-620; idem, 'Remembering the past in early modern England: oral and written tradition', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6<sup>th</sup> ser., vol. 9 (1999), pp 233-56; idem, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford, 2000).

<sup>554</sup> NLI MS 1793, ff 23-4, 26-7, 29-31; Steele, *Proclamations*, ii, pp 114-6.

<sup>555</sup> Breandán Ó Buachalla, 'James Our True King: The Ideology of Irish Royalism in the Seventeenth Century', in D. George Boyce, Robert Eccleshall & Vincent Geoghegan (eds), *Political thought in Ireland since the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1993), pp 7-35; idem, 'Poetry and Politics in Early Modern Ireland', in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland/Iris an dá Chultúr*, 7 (1992), pp 149-75.

<sup>556</sup> Deana Rankin, *Between Spenser and Swift: English Writing in Seventeenth-Century Ireland* (Cambridge, 2005), pp 230-72.

ongoing political, religious and social concerns that derived from the events of the 1640s, most especially the rebellion of 1641.

The importance of 1641 in Protestant eyes stemmed from its brutal sectarian edge, as exemplified in the tales of massacres perpetrated against Protestant settlers, often culled from the extensive witness depositions collected in the 1640s and 1650s. Yet to emphasise these depositions as sources is problematic in contemporary context, for apart from the official elite, of which figures such as Temple and Henry Jones were members, who else had access to them, and who else read them? Such accounts undoubtedly became potent as they found their way into print, but the Irish Protestant perception of 1641 was also shaped by the reality of their experience, for at least until the 1680s, the rebellion was within living memory. That memory had also been underpinned by contemporary rumour; were there any reasons to think that localised violence was not nationwide and the more bloodthirsty for that? Revived fears of another rebellion recurred throughout the second half of the seventeenth century and beyond, in both Ireland and England, and such revivals took place within specific and explicit contexts. While the memory of 1641 retained a status as a shared bond for Ireland's Protestant community, this became more pertinent at moments of real and perceived crisis such as the Popish Plot, construed as a potential re-run of what a previous generation of Protestants had endured as the wheel seemed to come full circle, and further crises over time provoked further disputation.<sup>557</sup> Such expressions suggested uncertainty and fear, and the second half of the seventeenth century is replete with them. Between their exposure to danger in 1641 and their seeming salvation after 1691, Irish Protestants found the memory of what had allegedly happened in 1641 particularly relevant. But equally it was useful, being revived at moments of crisis to bolster their position in the face of danger. Such revivals could (and did) occur at particular junctures. The Popish Plot is one of these. In a culture with a strong sense of history, oral traditions, shared experience and memory could readily be combined, and could sometimes find another audience. Writings that touched upon 1641 were polemical by definition, whether published in Ireland or Britain. Ireland's status as a *de facto* colony ensured that the key to influencing the policies of its governors lay in London. The shared awareness of that wider polity became instrumental in keeping fears of the Catholic Irish alive, for whether one liked it or not, they were inextricably a

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<sup>557</sup> Toby Barnard, '1641: a bibliographical essay' in MacCuarta (ed), *Ulster 1641*, pp 173-186.



part of it. The realities of Irish society fed into the concerns of Irish Protestants; but it was the perception of Irish Catholics that facilitated the parallel fears of English Protestants. And at the heart of such fears, the perceived and actual events of 1641 loomed large. This underpinned the reasons why the eventual claims of Titus Oates, and the later allegations about such an 'Irish plot' as was alleged to exist, inevitably struck a chord amongst many who were made aware of it. The emphasis in England on the supposed existence of an Irish Catholic plot ignored the continual (and more real) fears of unrest among Scottish Presbyterians in Ulster that so preoccupied governments in Dublin, but the fact that such allegations of an 'Irish plot' became relevant at this juncture is suggestive of the fears of Catholics in general, and Irish Catholics in particular, that the Popish Plot tapped into. Taken as a whole, the accounts of such witnesses as would eventually be promoted by Oates and Shaftesbury amounted to a body of evidence strongly suggesting that there was indeed a plot afoot in Ireland. The existence of such allegations illustrates both the intersection of Irish and British history at a moment of crisis, and the forgotten reality that Ireland became involved in the broader realities of the Popish Plot and the subsequent Exclusion Crisis.

For many in England, the events of the Exclusion Crisis bore a disturbing resemblance to the events that had led to the English Civil War in the 1640s. And as English minds harked back to those, it was probably inevitable that they would begin to dwell on the events in Ireland of 1641. The issue is not 1641 in itself, but what it was believed to be. The rebellion had acquired its relevance quite quickly, and the propaganda arising from it during the 1640s has been studied in various manners.<sup>558</sup> Its role after the restoration is another matter. When one thinks of massacres in the context of 1641, the obvious massacres are those of Protestant settlers. They are by no means the only ones, but they were the most heavily publicised and noted. For example, a report sent to parliament in 1649 on the capture of Drogheda by Oliver Cromwell's chaplain states plainly the death of 3,552 in the town, yet does so without hyperbole or extrapolation; it is a simple statement of fact. Inflicted upon the enemy, such violence could be acceptable.<sup>559</sup> Given the changes that the Protestant community underwent between 1641 and 1660, it is understandable that they would exert themselves to defend

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<sup>558</sup> See the works cited above at p. 95, n. 470.

<sup>559</sup> *A letter from Ireland read in the House of Commons...from Mr. Hugh Peters* (London, 1649), np. This question, amongst others, is addressed in Geoffrey Parker, 'The etiquette of atrocity: the laws of war in early modern Europe' in Geoffrey Parker, *Empire, war and faith in early modern Europe* (London, 2002), pp 143-68.

their new interests. The logic of eradicating the commonwealth across three kingdoms after 1660 was the eradication of all it had done. In Ireland, this theoretically meant reversing the massive land transfers from which so many colonists had benefited, and while such wholesale revision was qualified, the issue remained contentious, to be opposed by those Protestants who had benefited from it. The maintenance of a particular view of 1641 became a part of such opposition, and resonated throughout the restoration. Indeed, in the negotiations between Catholic spokesmen and the crown after the Restoration, the arguments in favour of the 1649 treaty between Charles I and the Confederates had been employed; Catholic loyalty had been emphasized, and the injustice of any blanket denunciation of Catholics was highlighted.<sup>560</sup> However, there was a simple response: 'it is no new experiment in Ireland to dispose of lands forfeited by rebellion'.<sup>561</sup> The 1662 Act of Settlement that substantively confirmed most of the Cromwellian confiscations subsequently proceeded from the assumption that the 'unnatural insurrection' of 1641 had become 'a formed and almost national rebellion of the Irish Papists...to the destruction of the English and Protestants inhabitants in Ireland'.<sup>562</sup> Alongside such a damning indictment were concomitant assurances of Protestant loyalty, but the basis for the content of the act remained a constant, 'forasmuch as the rapines, depredations and massacres committed by the said Irish and Popish rebels and enemies are not only well known to this present parliament, but are notorious to the whole world'.<sup>563</sup> Therein lay the justification for the forfeiture of the properties of Irish Catholics.

Naturally, such sweeping assumptions as converted into law were contested. The Franciscan Peter Walsh, petitioning Ormond for Catholic redress in 1660, made no denial of Catholic involvement in warfare in Ireland. 'But you know, my Lord, there are many thousands of Protestants in the three kingdoms, who have been far more heinously criminal, both against his Majesty and against his father'.<sup>564</sup> Given the protean career of a figure such as Roger Boyle, Lord Broghill (rewarded at the Restoration as earl of Orrery despite a successful Cromwellian interlude), one could see

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<sup>560</sup> TCD MS 587, ff 205-11.

<sup>561</sup> TCD MS 587, f 323.

<sup>562</sup> 'An act for the better execution of his Majesties gracious declaration for the settlement of the Kingdom of Ireland' (14 & 15 Cha. II) in *The Irish Statutes (rev.edition): 3 Edward II to the Union, AD 1310-1800* (Dublin, 1995 ed.), p. 85.

<sup>563</sup> *Irish Statutes*, pp 86-7.

<sup>564</sup> Peter Walsh, *A letter desiring a just and merciful regard of the Roman Catholicks of Ireland* (Dublin?, 1662), np.

his point. Yet the counterblast to Walsh, *The Irish colours displayed*, was credited to Orrery, and argued to extremity, deeming the inherent savagery of the Irish Catholic to be an evident reality. The 'bloody animosities were constant and hereditary to them, so long before any division between them in matters of religion, and withal how much they have been sharpened by that accident', an idea neatly extended to the Old English, thereby exonerating all but the newer, Protestant colonists from complicity in conflict.<sup>565</sup> Religion here exposed another facet of political loyalty, with the misguided inclination of the Irish to follow their clergy making them little more than 'Spanish Papists'; the well-worn theme of foreign – Catholic - intervention in Ireland remained a constant.<sup>566</sup> The limited restoration of some previous occupants to their estates in the 1660s had gone too far as it was, and the implicit invocation of violence came with a polemical purpose, as 'the only good effect of such infinite slaughters and murders as have hitherto infamed [sic] that kingdom...has been the producing of this conjuncture wherein his Majesty hath gained an occasion of setting it upon lasting foundations'.<sup>567</sup> Walsh's statement, as cited above, received a direct rebuttal, for 'the cold and treacherous murthers...of above two hundred thousand in the first two years, makes the massacres unparalleled, and excuses all cruelties may have been returned by the English in the heat of war.'<sup>568</sup> The Irish Catholic is the bedrock of this argument: 1641 (and a massively exaggerated casualty figure) the evidence and rationale. The double standard is evident; English forces could readily engage in massacres such as that at Dungan's Hill in 1647 that readily obviated moral equivalency or superiority.<sup>569</sup> Yet in the eyes of the author, such actions were defensible. Cannily, Orrery (if he was indeed the author) refused to enter into debate over the key issue raised by Walsh: the Ormond peace of 1649, which became the bedrock of Catholic claims on the crown throughout the Restoration period (as articulated by figures such as Richard Talbot). With regards to the specific nature of the claims on which Catholic spokesmen stood, the peace of 1649 (and the question of whether it remained binding) was bound to be anathema to the Protestant interest in Ireland, as it had coalesced during the interregnum. In 1649 it had prompted a furious denunciation by officers in Munster who declared their allegiance to parliament; the treaty was depicted as wholesale surrender, with the

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<sup>565</sup> *The Irish colours displayed, in a reply of an English Protestant to a late letter of an Irish Roman Catholique, both address'd to his grace the Duke of Ormond* (London, 1662), p. 4.

<sup>566</sup> *The Irish colours displayed*, p. 5.

<sup>567</sup> *The Irish colours displayed*, p. 8.

<sup>568</sup> *The Irish colours displayed*, p. 12.

<sup>569</sup> Padraig Lenihan, *Confederate Catholics at War, 1641-49* (Cork, 2001), pp 209-14.

mooted act of oblivion 'but a fair inducement to allure the Irish to attempt once more to take away the lives of the rest which remained, and then our lands were their own also.'<sup>570</sup> Symbolically, the tract was dated 23 October 1649, eight years to the supposed day of the outbreak of rebellion. In 1678 the issue recurred again, as it was reported to the viceroy James Butler, duke of Ormond, that in London 'the French ambassador has given out that his master would see the benefit of the peace the Catholics made with you'.<sup>571</sup> A more tangible concern for Irish Protestants thereby made itself felt over time's remove.

*The Irish colours displayed* also argued from implication: the calamity of 1641 proved the untrustworthy and dangerous nature of Catholics. The massive exaggeration of Protestant casualties simply vindicated such militant stances. Given the events of the 1640s and 1650s, the restitution of the Catholic community could only come at the expense of Protestants, theoretically exposing both themselves and England to danger once again.<sup>572</sup> But the utility of scare mongering was not lost on those in the 1660s, such as Orrery, who sought to block the implications of the land settlement.<sup>573</sup> Certainly, John Lynch took the view that the maintenance of the confiscations of the 1650s was the principal motivation for inciting hatred against Catholics, and that rumours of their treasonable activities inevitably followed rumours of concessions to Catholics, thus providing a pretext for further repression.<sup>574</sup>

The perception of 1641 as unnatural rebellion was essential to this Irish Protestant perspective; the threat of a repeat of 1641 was vital to its maintenance. This is not to ascribe purely material notions to Irish Protestants; fears of a repeat of 1641 may have served a purpose, but they were also quite genuine. 'Less will not content the Irish than the rooting out all English interest here' was one observation, and there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the belief.<sup>575</sup> But the opposing realities could differ. Sir John Perceval, writing to Sir Robert Southwell in 1665, observed that 'I suppose you have heard of a new Irish rebellion which has made a great noise here, and I guess a greater with you, but I do not find anything in it. It is said all was but a story, and

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<sup>570</sup> *The remonstrance and resolutions of the Protestant army of Munster* (Cork, 1649).

<sup>571</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 16 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p 235).

<sup>572</sup> 'The heads of the intended declaration by the Confederate Protestants of Ireland', c.1660 (*CSPI*, 1660-62, 167-68); 'The humble remonstrances and addresses of the King's Protestant subjects', c.1660 (*CSPI*, 1660-62, pp 173-76).

<sup>573</sup> Creighton, 'The Catholic interest in Irish politics', pp 126-40.

<sup>574</sup> Lynch, *Cambrensis Eversus*, i, pp 35, 59.

<sup>575</sup> John Dillingham to Lord Montagu, 26 May 1664 (*HMC Montagu*, p. 166).

therefore I shall say no more of it'.<sup>576</sup> But over thirteen years later, the threat to Protestant Ireland (and England) perceived during the Popish Plot of 1678 derived strength and credence from a belief in such perceptions, and the assumption of an imminent Catholic rebellion along the lines of 1641.

But such fears had never quite gone away. In 1676 Henry Jones, as bishop of Meath, had returned to the theme, preaching a sermon at Christ-Church in Dublin that offered a salutary lesson to Ireland's Protestants, warning them of the dangers they faced with Antichrist abroad in the world. Preached and published in Dublin in 1676, a London edition was published without alteration in March 1679 during the Popish Plot, in an edition dedicated to Arthur Capel, earl of Essex, the previous lord lieutenant of Ireland and by 1679 a leading member of the 'Whig' opposition in England. Jones proceeded from the assumption that 'Ireland...is above all other nations in Europe, influenced by the power of Rome...of this we have had memorials of former ages, some of them fresh and bleeding': the implicit reference could only be to 1641, especially in the hands of this author.<sup>577</sup> The text itself was a dense and complex biblical exegesis that sought to both explore and explain the current machinations of Antichrist on earth from scripture. In the form of the Papacy, Antichrist had sought to destroy Christ's Protestant witnesses across Europe.

And can the bloody butcheries of poor Protestants by the cruel Irish in Ireland be in this forgotten, when about one hundred thousand perished anno 1641? Yet to that impudence is that now risen, as to disavow any such rebellion of the Irish, or such their murders of the innocent Protestants in Ireland; but daring to aver on the contrary, that they themselves were the sufferers, and that by the English and Protestants.<sup>578</sup>

Scepticism about the nature of a Catholic plot, not to mention the events of 1641, would be notably absent in August 1678, when the first allegations about the Popish Plot had been presented to the English government. One part of the plot was to be the securing of Ireland 'to the tyranny of the Pope...by a general rebellion and massacre as

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<sup>576</sup> Sir John Perceval to Sir Robert Southwell, 28 Jan 1665 (*HMC Egmont*, ii, p. 12).

<sup>577</sup> [Henry Jones], *A sermon of Antichrist, preached at Christ-Church, Dublin, Novemb. 12, 1676* (2nd ed., London, 1679), A2.

<sup>578</sup> Jones, *A sermon of Antichrist*, p. 23.

formerly'.<sup>579</sup> The assumption was deemed to reflect the danger, and the Catholic was the enemy. For Irish Protestants, the most immediate danger, as illustrated by their own historical experience, would be from the Irish Catholics whom they lived amongst.

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<sup>579</sup> Coventry to Ormond, 13 Aug 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns., iv, p. 183).

## Chapter 6:

### Governing Ireland: structural problems?

The impact of the Popish Plot on Ireland was dictated by the religious and social composition of the island, and was exacerbated by the continued existence of outstanding problems faced by those who sought to govern it. The Restoration period in Ireland can be loosely divided into two sections. During the 1660s the twin pillars of the monarchy and the established church had both been restored, and the contentious land settlement had been implemented. By 1669 it seemed that the essential business of the Restoration in an Irish context had been completed. The replacement of the incumbent viceroy, Ormond, in that year seemed to suggest that a new departure was deemed necessary. But if the end of the decade saw the end of one phase of the Restoration period, it was perhaps inevitable that this juncture would prompt reflection.

One such reflection came from the pen of a Catholic Bishop, Nicholas French of Ferns, a zealous champion of the Catholic cause who had been active in the high politics of the Confederate Association in the 1640s. He was understandably hostile to the price paid by those Irish Catholics whose dispossession was confirmed under the Restoration settlement, and he readily identified those he deemed responsible for 'the sad and deplorable state of the Irish nation, and the apparent injustice, and inequality used in the present settlement of that kingdom'.<sup>580</sup> He placed a great emphasis on the dispossession of the Catholic Irish, blaming leading Protestant grandees for successfully seeking to maintain the dispossessions of the 1650s via the land settlement of the 1660s. The 1662 Act of Settlement simply gave a legal veneer to the continuation of the Cromwellian hierarchy in Ireland. To those who argued that the military strength of the Protestant interest in Ireland made it practically impossible to alter the situation, he caustically observed that 'the Cromwellian party in Ireland hath no more power than what his Majesty is pleased to grant them'.<sup>581</sup> The principle of dispossession by religion had thus been extended to previous incarnations of the English interest, and what precedent might that set for the future? In this reading, the settlement of the 1660s was

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<sup>580</sup> [Nicholas French], 'A narrative of the Earl of Clarendon's settlement and sale of Ireland', (Louvain, c.1667-8) in S.H. Bindon (ed), *The Historical Works of the Right Rev. Nicholas French, D.D.* (2 vol, Dublin, 1846), i, p. 1.

<sup>581</sup> 'A narrative of the Earl of Clarendon's settlement and sale of Ireland', pp 99-100.

inherently unstable. French entered the ranks of disputation over the events of 1641, lowering the death toll to 400 and seeking thereby to exonerate those Catholics whose alleged bloodthirstiness had provided the pretext for their dispossession.<sup>582</sup> He also stressed the loyalty of the Irish to the crown in defeat, which could only highlight their continued suffering.<sup>583</sup> And the continued dispossession of the potentially faithful Catholic Irish, and their alienation from the crown, might yet open the door to the lurking threat of Presbyterian Scotland.<sup>584</sup>

French was not the only figure to raise this issue; others sought to do so in a more practical manner. When in 1671 Richard Talbot, the Irish Catholic courtier, army officer and close associate of York, who had acted as a spokesman for Irish Catholic interests in the early 1660s, sought once again to lobby for Catholic redress on the grounds of loyalty to the crown, the binding nature of the 1649 peace treaty, and the mismanagement and illegality (as was argued) of the land settlement, his arguments were met with a hostile yet equally practical response from Heneage Finch, the English attorney-general.<sup>585</sup> Finch argued that Catholics had, after all, rebelled in the 1640s, that Catholic spokesmen such as Talbot were being equally disingenuous in seeking land for their own personal gain, and that the settlement had been perfectly legal.<sup>586</sup> But the clinching argument in favour of the Protestant interest in Ireland was supremely pragmatic: the settlement had been successful, so why should it be changed? For, 'if this foundation be shaken, no other can be laid'.<sup>587</sup>

If French can be said to voice the concerns of the dispossessed, one must logically turn to the opposing concerns of the possessor. Analyses of Irish society tend to attract the attention of historians, but an oft-neglected one has a particular relevance here: Sir William Temple's 'An essay on the present state and settlement of Ireland'.<sup>588</sup> Composed *circa* 1668, and addressed to his patron Henry Bennet, earl of Arlington, Temple's unpublished treatise dealt with the settlement of the 1660s, and its flaws. Temple was the son of Sir John Temple, and had dwelt in Ireland prior to embarking on a successful diplomatic career overseas in 1663. In his treatise, he astutely perceived the divisive nature of the land settlement. While opposed to any further alteration of the

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<sup>582</sup> 'A narrative of the Earl of Clarendon's settlement and sale of Ireland', p. 108.

<sup>583</sup> 'A narrative of the Earl of Clarendon's settlement and sale of Ireland', pp 112-4.

<sup>584</sup> 'A narrative of the Earl of Clarendon's settlement and sale of Ireland', p. 121.

<sup>585</sup> Gilbert Library, MS 198, ff 40-8.

<sup>586</sup> Gilbert Library, MS 198, ff 51-74.

<sup>587</sup> Gilbert Library, MS 198, f. 72.

<sup>588</sup> Sir William Temple, 'An essay on the present state and condition of Ireland' in *Select letters to the prince of Orange* (1701), iii, pp 197-216.



settlement, he perceived the necessity for some kind of finality to guarantee its stability. Given the interlocking connections between finance, security, and investment, he argued that only a secure government, with a strong financial base, could provide the necessary confidence to ensure immigration and investment. A streamlined, highly trained, and 4,000-strong standing army was to be created. Protestant immigration, alongside further plantation in Wicklow, Kildare, Carlow and Waterford, was to be promoted. Aware that, through both division and incompetence, the Irish exchequer needed to be continually propped up by English subventions, and slightly wary of the Irish parliament (of which he had been a member), Temple advocated the takeover of Irish offices by English appointees, 'to own and support that which is truly a loyal English Protestant interest, and to make it as comprehensive as can be'.<sup>589</sup> Foreshadowing issues that prevented the calling of an Irish parliament in 1677-81, Temple's essay essentially advocated re-colonisation under strong Irish government, subordinate to English control. Within his analysis were astute observations on the condition of Ireland that were reflected in the policy of Irish governments during the 1670s and early 1680s. Yet underpinning this was the realisation that Ireland remained a deeply unsettled country, and that the English interest there was not necessarily secure. However, his stricture on the appointment of English office holders was applicable to the viceroys of the 1670s. Vice regal policy in Ireland can offer a window into Ireland's perceived problems, and into their potential solutions, for the instructions given to viceroys were inherently prescriptive. More fundamental issues that were thrown into stark relief by the later impact of the Popish Plot underpinned the institutional problems that viceroys sought to deal with. But these considerations inevitably beg the question of what condition Ireland was actually in. The analysis of Ireland provided by Sir William Petty can amplify those of Temple and French: *The Political Anatomy of Ireland*, composed circa 1672.<sup>590</sup>

Petty recognised the significance of the 1640s; it lay at the heart of his analysis of what was a post-war society. And

The cause of that war was a desire of the Romists to recover the Church-revenue...and of the common Irish, to get all the Englishmen's estates; and of the ten or twelve grandees of Ireland, to get the empire of the whole. But upon the playing of the game or match upon so great odds, the English won and

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<sup>589</sup> Temple, 'An essay on the present state and condition of Ireland', p. 213.

<sup>590</sup> William Petty, 'The Political Anatomy of Ireland' in C.H. Hull (ed), *The Economic Writings of Sir William Petty* (2 vols, London, 1899), ii, pp 121-231.

have (among, and besides other pretences) a gamesters right at least to their estates.<sup>591</sup>

Petty had previously estimated the Irish population to consist of two hundred thousand English, one hundred thousand Scots (deemed Presbyterian) and eight hundred thousand Irish (deemed Catholic).<sup>592</sup> The English were drastically outnumbered. Yet they might not necessarily be the victims of another rebellion: they had a strategic and military advantage in Ireland, and could probably survive, especially as further support could come from England itself. Thus, instead of the military solution apparently favoured by some, 'what we offer shall tend to the transmuting one people into the other'.<sup>593</sup>

Petty's analysis went further: the Irish were inevitably linked to a foreign power in the form of the Catholic Church,<sup>594</sup> the land settlement was the key source of division on the island,<sup>595</sup> and the Irish may well have had valid grievances and were not inherently degenerate, and were therefore capable of reform, but they fully expected the restitution of what they had lost in the 1650s.<sup>596</sup> Within these aspects of Petty's analysis was the issue that, for many, was the most important of all: religion. Or more precisely, an opposition to its manifestation in Catholicism.

Throughout the 1670s, governments in Ireland had sought to stabilise and secure Ireland after decades of warfare and instability. The agent of change was the government, and by extension the viceroy. Examinations of high politics have been a preoccupation of Irish historians, and may indeed seem conservative or outmoded. However, they are also incomplete; the historiography of Restoration Ireland – including the viceregal politics of the area - remains largely unwritten.<sup>597</sup> However, it might be more revealing to look at viceroys as potential agents of change rather than merely ostensible great men. One could readily debate the contentious (if tiresome) paradigm of whether early modern Ireland can be categorised as a kingdom or a colony. Its legal status as a kingdom was declared in 1541; its status as a colony is best

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<sup>591</sup> Petty, 'Political Anatomy', p. 154.

<sup>592</sup> Petty, 'Political Anatomy', p. 141.

<sup>593</sup> Petty, 'Political Anatomy', pp 155-7.

<sup>594</sup> Petty, 'Political Anatomy', p. 164.

<sup>595</sup> Petty, 'Political Anatomy', p. 167.

<sup>596</sup> Petty, 'Political Anatomy', pp 201-3.

<sup>597</sup> Notable exceptions are J.C. Beckett, 'The Irish viceroyalty in the Restoration period' in *idem*, *Confrontations: Studies in Irish History* (Plymouth, 1972), pp 67-86; Aydelotte, 'The Duke of Ormond and the English Government of Ireland', *passim*.

suggested by the fact that by the end of the 1660s, the Restoration settlement had ensured that the bulk of available land in Ireland now lay in the hands of Protestant colonists. This, however, did not guarantee a monopoly of political power for the Protestant interest. They undoubtedly retained influence, but political power was essentially dictated by the exigencies of English affairs, and was essentially subordinated to English interests. However, there were difficulties with this ostensibly neat arrangement. Despite the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Ireland remained a deeply unsettled country. Catholic grievance over the anomalies of the land settlement raised the spectre of Catholic subversion and rebellion, which was accentuated by memories of the wars of mid-century, and the unsettling reality that Catholics substantially outnumbered Protestants in Ireland. On the other hand, there was also the existence of large numbers of non-conformists in Ulster, whose potential militancy was rendered the more significant by their proximity to Scotland. Added to these two overt threats was the legacy of the devastation of the 1640s and 1650s (evinced, for example, by the level of Tory activity in Ireland at this time). The Dublin government was in no position to comprehensively address any of these questions; its slender financial and military resources were inadequate. The implementation of its policies was thereby hamstrung, and two further issues emerged from this. Firstly, the inability to adequately implement such policies as were deemed appropriate ensured a degree of continual uncertainty about Irish affairs. Secondly, this reality ensured that the viceroys of the Restoration period would be continually tasked with attempting to overhaul the various branches of the administration that overlay and sought to manage the realities of Restoration Ireland.

Parallels can be drawn between the four viceroys who served in Ireland during the 1670s, three of whom were English appointees. All would win or lose their post through the vagaries of court politics (a concrete indication of Ireland's subordination). More pertinently, all would face similar problems during their tenure. And all sought to grapple with what were essentially the same issues. Within the roles of the viceroys, key themes are discernible: the exercise of greater control from London, and concerns about Ireland's internal security that were tempered by a realisation that an accommodation with at least some segments of Catholic opinion in Ireland was desirable if not necessary. This latter proved at variance with the inescapable influence that events in England would have in Ireland; for example, the shift towards harsher measures against Catholics often stemmed directly from harshening attitudes towards

Catholics in England. The onset of the Popish Plot during Ormond's third term as viceroy illustrated how these issues, and others, were inextricable from one another, but also how they had, as yet, defied resolution. Admittedly these were institutional issues, but they overlay more fundamental problems that were highlighted by the crisis of 1678-81.

Ormond's tenure as viceroy during the Popish Plot was his third appointment to the role. Having overseen the implementation of the Restoration settlement as viceroy from 1662-9 (and eventually incurring the wrath of figures such as Nicholas French for doing so), by February 1669 Ormond had found himself in an awkward position. The fall of Clarendon in 1667 had ramifications for Ormond, and rumours about his dismissal began to circulate in the aftermath of Clarendon's own fall from grace.<sup>598</sup> He would be formally replaced on 3 May 1669 by John Robartes, baron Robartes of Truro (who had been nominally appointed lord deputy in 1660). A number of factors dictated the choice.<sup>599</sup> Robartes's appointment came at a time of increasing covenanter activity in Scotland, and he was in a position to ensure that moderate Presbyterians in Ireland remained detached from this; he conformed to the established church, but was an advocate of toleration and was markedly sympathetic to dissenters. The appointment also arose from the pro-French and pro-Catholic inclination of the government and concomitant hostility towards the Dutch, as well as Charles II's wish to break his dependency on the Anglican and Cavalier interest personified by figures such as Ormond. While an unpopular choice, Robartes could be seen as a compromise candidate, being a more attractive choice than Orrery, the most obvious figure in Ireland to replace Ormond. However, Charles's precarious financial situation ensured that Robartes's instructions placed a great emphasis on financial matters.

He arrived in Ireland on 18 September 1669 and waived the attendant ceremonials. He had a reputation as a brusque and severe, but efficient and energetic administrator: 'a man of a morose and cynical temper, just in his administration, but vicious under the appearances of virtue'.<sup>600</sup> Robartes came equipped with extensive instructions. He was to review the strength and condition of the Irish army and impose the oaths of allegiance and supremacy on both officers and soldiers, cashiering any who

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<sup>598</sup> James McGuire, 'Why was Ormond dismissed in 1669?' in *Irish Historical Studies*, 18 (1973), pp 295-312.

<sup>599</sup> The following sections are based on material written for the Royal Irish Academy's *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>600</sup> *Burnet's History of my own time*, i, p 176.

refused them, and was to implement reforms to alleviate the penury and indiscipline of the armed forces. He was also to conduct a review of the Irish revenue, with a particular emphasis on determining outstanding arrears, and ensuring the payment of the civil and military lists. He was to undertake measures to improve Irish trade (without prejudice to English trade). Finally, he was to attempt to bring dissenters to conformity with the established church, albeit without provocation.<sup>601</sup> Instructions with regards to Catholics were notably absent.

In many ways, these policies were merely a continuation of the policies of Ormond's administration. But Robartes met with a degree of approval, due to his rapid inspections of both the treasury and the army, and his desire to initiate reforms that were presumed to be for 'the public good', even if his strictness prompted a degree of unease.<sup>602</sup> There were apprehensions about his personal severity (he banned theatres in Dublin), which were compounded by a lack of personal connections in Ireland. But Robartes's personal nature and subsequent unpopularity, his inclination to follow orders to the letter, his sympathy towards Presbyterians and his unpopular investigations into the Irish revenues alienated many, and his authority was soon undermined. His vigorous attempts to investigate Ireland's finances were opposed by Ormond and the Irish council, who refused to co-operate with him. Ormond also sought to undermine him in London, where his recommendations were being challenged and overturned, especially those relating to the Irish revenues. Robartes was credited with a commendable energy and concern for the public good, but his tendency to by-pass the normal channels of communication with London, along with his backing of the claimants in a dispute over eight years worth of army arrears, saw him rebuked by the King for exceeding the limits of his instructions. Ormond seized upon this to claim that Robartes was fomenting mutiny in the army, and was backed by Arlington at court; the King sided with them. Robartes subsequently requested his recall in January 1670. His loss of influence was evident in his being ordered to remain in a caretaker capacity. His request to appoint a deputy was refused, and Sir John Berkeley, Lord Berkeley of Stratton, replaced him in May 1670; Robartes pointedly avoided the Irish nobility on his departure. On his dismissal Oliver Plunkett, the recently appointed Catholic primate and archbishop of Armagh, applauded Robartes for his treatment of Catholics (though

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<sup>601</sup> 'Entry of Instructions to John, Lord Robarts', 23 July 1669 (*CSPI 1666-9*, pp 759-61).

<sup>602</sup> Conway to Henry More, 9 Nov. 1669 (M.H Nicolson & Sarah Hutton (eds), *The Conway letters : the correspondence of Anne, viscountess Conway, Henry More, and their friends, 1642-1684* (Rev. ed Oxford, 1992), p. 298).

Plunkett would later claim to have been persecuted by him). Largely impeded by the factional politics of the court, Robartes's tenure as lord lieutenant proved too short to have an impact, and many of the issues he had been ordered to address remained problematic for his successors.

His immediate successor was Berkeley. There were high expectations of him after the unpopular Robartes, and he was warmly welcomed to Dublin; Berkeley was more politic than his predecessor, despite his age and reputation for drunkenness. But given the inclinations of the English government at this time, Berkeley, as a Catholic, was an obvious choice. His instructions were similar to those of both Ormond and Robartes, indicating a degree of unfinished business. He was to continue the financial and military reforms that Robartes had been instructed to implement, but he was given particular instructions to overhaul the established church, and to crack down severely on those Catholic clergy who had opposed the 1661 remonstrance that had sought to reconcile a religious adherence to Catholicism with political loyalty to the crown.<sup>603</sup> While this did not necessarily imply automatic indulgence for those who had subscribed to it, he was instructed to offer these subscribers a degree of protection if circumstances permitted.<sup>604</sup> Ably assisted by his highly corrupt chief secretary, Sir Ellis Leighton, Berkeley got off to a promising start in Ireland, being seen as efficient, diligent and diplomatic. He put the Irish army into an impressive condition relatively quickly; as a former soldier, military affairs attracted much of his attention. He was markedly civil to Quakers, and encouraged reappointments to vacant Church of Ireland sees. Berkeley did not seem to be motivated by zeal for any one particular form of religious denomination, which arguably could be useful in an Irish context. However, in line with English policy, he proved especially tolerant of Catholicism. Mass was said in his home, and despite his instructions he was well-disposed towards the anti-remonstrants; he formed a good relationship with Plunkett, not least because of the latter's assistance in dealing with the persistent problem of Tories. Drawn largely from amongst the dispossessed (with an anti-settler and anti-Protestant perspective on that account) these bandits were arguably the most tangible and significant internal security question in Ireland during the Restoration period. A *quid pro quo* emerged, whereby Plunkett would negotiate with Tories to end their activities or leave the country. As

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<sup>603</sup> Anne Creighton, 'The Remonstrance of December 1661 and Catholic politics in Restoration Ireland' in *Irish Historical Studies*, 34 (2004), pp 16-41.

<sup>604</sup> 'Draft of instructions for John Lord Berkeley', Feb. 1670 (*CSPI, 1669-70*, pp 78-81).

archbishop of Armagh, one of the most significant areas of Tory activity in Ireland, Plunkett was excellently placed to deal with them. In exchange, though, Berkeley proved especially willing to tolerate Catholicism. Plunkett exploited the opportunity provided by Berkeley, whose toleration of Catholic clergy was seemingly conditional on their avoidance of politics.

Berkeley was an efficient administrator, but his tenure did not leave a distinctive mark on policy; more than many other viceroys, he was reduced to the level of functionary, eventually serving as little more than an intermediary for policy as dictated from London. Early setbacks were outweighed by satisfaction with his governance, but over time his views, especially in the critical area of finance, became marginalised at court. Bad relations with key figures such as Ormond and Arlington also served to undermine his position. By mid-1671 he had largely lost royal support, despite having absented himself from Ireland between May and September in order to deal with this very problem. Crucially, his tenure coincided with the start of the financial undertaking of Richard Jones, earl of Ranelagh; Berkeley had opposed the undertaking, thereby alienating Ranelagh, but was ordered not to interfere with it, which effectively sidelined him from any authority over Irish affairs. Ranelagh increasingly became pre-eminent in Irish affairs, and while Berkeley retained control over the army, Ranelagh swiftly neutralised this, thus removing his final leverage. Berkeley's recall was perhaps inevitable. Devoid of influence and isolated, he came under the sway of Alice Hamilton, Lady Clanbrassil, and his work rate decreased considerably in late-1671; by now Ireland was effectively governed by the Committee for Irish Affairs in London. By this point, Berkeley's initial successes had been eclipsed by Ranelagh's ascendancy, and finally he fell from grace. Having been instructed to readmit Catholics to corporate towns, Berkeley provoked a massive dispute within Dublin Corporation that saw Leighton briefly installed as recorder. In the aftermath of this he was recalled, with explicit orders not to make new appointments in the interim, particularly in Dublin, and on 11 May 1672 he handed over power to Archbishop Michael Boyle and Sir Arthur Forbes as lord justices, pending the arrival of his replacement.

Arguably, Robartes and Berkeley were victims of circumstances that had ultimately originated at court in London; the question of Ireland's finances, and the shifts in policy necessitated by the shifts in policy of the English government being the most obvious examples of this. The period of Robartes' viceroyalty was too brief to

have made a difference. That of Berkeley's tenure, while of a longer duration, had seen him rendered impotent and irrelevant by circumstances beyond his control, a situation exacerbated by his own personality. But the third viceroy of the 1670s served for a far longer duration, and was in a position to sidestep, at least for a time, the pressures that had blighted the appointments of his predecessors.

Arthur Capel, earl of Essex, was appointed lord lieutenant of Ireland on 21 May 1672 in succession to Berkeley. Sworn in on 5 August 1672, he was apparently surprised at his appointment, 'for he had not pretended to it: and he was a violent enemy to Popery'.<sup>605</sup> Even before his appointment, Essex had been provided with Orrery's opinion of the state of the kingdom. Orrery's recommendations were acute, if not mendacious. Even before Essex was formally appointed, Orrery implored him 'to settle the corporations of this kingdom', in order to facilitate trade and security. He also advocated the payment of the civil and military lists (which was arguably an implicit warning about the activities of the revenue farmers), the overhaul of Ireland's defences and munitions supplies, and the blocking of any rumoured reductions in troop numbers (a particular gripe of Orrery with regard to Munster). On a familiar note, Orrery warned that the forces available were inadequate to the task of dealing with rebellions, and reliance on militias would ensue. Extra provisions were required, and harbours were in need of fortification; Orrery had previously suggested erecting a fort in Kinsale to alleviate this deficiency. He had been authorised to proceed, but in default of royal payments he was keeping the work going from his own pocket, and had paid for the readiness of Munster forces in the same way.<sup>606</sup>

Orrery would continue in the same vein after Essex arrived in Ireland. Indeed, his prescriptions foreshadow the themes of similar missives provided to Ormond between October and December 1678, in the months after the Popish Plot had come to light. One underlying possibility for his insistence on such matters lay in the fact that he had been stripped of his formal role as lord president of Munster following Essex's suppression of the post.<sup>607</sup> He bemoaned the lack of the lord presidency that he had previously treated as a personal fiefdom, naturally claiming that he himself was not interested in the post but, rather, was motivated by 'the kings service and the safety of

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<sup>605</sup> *Burnet's History of my own time*, ii, p 108.

<sup>606</sup> Orrery to Essex, 30 Apr. 1672 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 1-5).

<sup>607</sup> Liam Irwin, 'The suppression of the Irish presidency system', *Irish Historical Studies*, 22 (1980), pp 21-32.



this kingdom'. He continued to demand measures for the security of Munster: the provision of extra supplies, the overhaul of the militia, a clampdown on unauthorised weapons in private hands, and even the issuing of a proclamation barring all except the army and militia from bearing arms in garrisons; he cited the last Dutch war as having been problematic in this regard.<sup>608</sup> Much of this was, arguably, understandable prudence, for Munster's southern coastal location and traditional links to the continent made it an obvious destination for potential invaders, and the brutal warfare that had wracked the province in the 1640s may well have contributed to the militancy and vigilance of many members of the Protestant interest there. But in the particular case of Orrery, with his prominent parliamentarian past, his motives were viewed with some scepticism by the restored regime and its acolytes.

In the early months of his tenure Essex was informed about key problems in Ireland: the inadequate munitions and dilapidated defence arrangements of the kingdom, especially in Dublin;<sup>609</sup> and the fact that Irish finances were, apparently, near exhaustion.<sup>610</sup> These issues had been referred to in his original instructions. However, Essex had also received private instructions from the King. He was thereby authorised to dispense with the oaths of allegiance and supremacy should the situation, in his view, warrant it, 'and instead thereof administer only the oath, wherof you shall receive herewith an authentic copy'. He was to ensure that Catholics were installed onto commissions of the peace, according to both the Kings declaration and his own discretion, and he was to determine 'what are the properest ways to give satisfaction to all our subjects in that our kingdom, in the point of liberty of conscience, without distinction of party, what numbers of several persuasions there are and by what proper means each party may best have its satisfaction'; he was to provide a report and recommendations on how best to achieve this. Finally, he was ordered to 'connive' at the presence of Catholic clergy, and was granted authority to tolerate them as he saw fit, conditional on them swearing the relevant oath.<sup>611</sup> Having been heavily repressed during the 1650s, there had been tentative attempts to rebuild the Catholic Church in Ireland during the 1660s, culminating in 1669 in three reappointments to Irish bishoprics, one of which had been Oliver Plunkett. Throughout the 1670s the Catholic Church would be reorganised in Ireland, as the Vatican began to reassert its authority.

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<sup>608</sup> Orrery to Essex, 13 Aug. 1672 (*Essex Papers*, i, pp 9-11).

<sup>609</sup> Rob Byron to Essex, 4 June 1672 (BL Stowe MS 200, f. 59).

<sup>610</sup> Michael Boyle to Essex, 6 July 1672 (BL Stowe MS 200, f. 70).

<sup>611</sup> Private instructions for Essex, 12 July 1672 (BL Add MS 21,505, f. 29).

Synods would be held throughout the decade to foster uniformity, and Catholic churches and schools would be tentatively constructed. Under Plunkett, as Primate, the church was in an expansive mode, to a degree that would prompt unrest and dissent as the decade wore on.<sup>612</sup> The Catholic Church was undoubtedly active once again, and Essex was prepared to reach an unofficial accommodation with it through an ostensibly severe but actually moderate policy.

Essex did not seem inclined to tolerate alternative authorities in Ireland. He refused Orrery permission to maintain private fortifications and weapons, and was not prepared to permit this to any 'private men'.<sup>613</sup> This was an affirmation of Essex's inclination to raise the government of Ireland above sectional interests and faction, and it was readily backed by the King: Charles subsequently instructed that Orrery was to be barred from fortifying his homes, and ordered that any claims that licences had been issued for this were to be investigated, and any such licences were to be revoked.<sup>614</sup> Orrery was not the only figure to whom this stricture would apply. In April 1673 Essex became aware of the unhappiness (and potential complaints) of unspecified noblemen about his policy of moving troops around the country. Essex was intent on continuing this policy, 'without which the troops will consist only of tenants and servants to some of these great men'.<sup>615</sup> The Irish army had been significantly reduced after 1660, was looked at askance for potentially dubious loyalties, and was generally scattered around the country in a de facto policing role.<sup>616</sup>

Yet despite his efforts Essex did not enjoy a completely free hand. This would become evident as the English parliament turned its attention to Ireland, and was hostile to any perceived favouritism to Catholics in Ireland: their place on commissions of the peace and corporations, any possible revision of the land settlement, the activities of Catholic clergy, and especially the activities of Peter and Richard Talbot.<sup>617</sup> It was noted by Godolphin that disarming Catholics was problematic, given that 'the crown had other enemies in Ireland...who had been equally obnoxious'. But there were important differences: Catholics, 'being poor and dispossessed of their estates were

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<sup>612</sup> A useful account is Benignus Millet, *A history of Irish Catholicism, vol. III: Survival and reorganisation, 1650-1695* (Dublin, 1968).

<sup>613</sup> Essex to Arlington, 27 Aug. 1672 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 20-21).

<sup>614</sup> Charles to Essex, 7 Sept. 1672 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 23-4).

<sup>615</sup> Essex to Arlington, 4 Apr. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 68-9).

<sup>616</sup> Beckett, 'Irish armed forces', pp 42, 45-6.

<sup>617</sup> Godolphin to Essex, 18 March 1673 (BL Stowe MS 201, f. 263).

desperate and more likely therefore to take violent courses for the righting themselves'; Presbyterian loyalty, on the other hand, would be guaranteed by self-interest.<sup>618</sup>

Essex was both assiduous and consistent; in March 1673 he strongly opposed the granting of the Phoenix Park to the Duchess of Cleveland (one of the Kings mistresses), even though he was aware that such a stance could potentially result in his dismissal.<sup>619</sup> His assiduousness would be testified to in April 1673 when he observed how 'I am very sensible of the public mischief which the kingdom of England may suffer, if some diligence be not used to hinder the Irish wool from being sent into foreign parts'. This despite the considerable profits that could potentially accrue to the viceroy from this, 'but I will never do any irregular thing for private advantage, which would be so great a prejudice to my own country'.<sup>620</sup>

Essex, after all, had other matters to contend with. His instructions had been wide ranging and comprehensive, and were fundamentally intended to reassert royal authority, while securing Ireland from both internal dissent and external threat. From August 1672 he had been concerned about the potential for unrest posed by Presbyterians in Ulster (especially in Derry, which was to receive a garrison with which to deal with them), though his inclination was to permit them a limited degree of toleration.<sup>621</sup> Such problems as they presented were augmented in coastal areas by geography, for Essex was also aware that 'the seditious preachers of Scotland' often went on the run in Ulster.<sup>622</sup> A watching brief would be continually held on the Presbyterians of Ulster, but in raising the issue of security, Essex was faced with the implications of some of his instructions. Aspects of them had dealt with the overhaul of the state in Ireland, which posed three interlocking questions: what was the priority of the government, who was going to be in control of it, and how was it going to be paid for?

The first question had the most obvious answer: Essex was in Ireland in order to maintain the Protestant interest. In December 1672 Arlington informed Essex that there were moves afoot to 'allow of an agency to support the Protestant's interests in that kingdom'. Charles's reaction was to query why this was necessary, given that there was a viceroy? Essex was implored to resist pressure for such an agency, given Charles's

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<sup>618</sup> Godolphin to Essex, 12 Apr. 1673 (BL Stowe MS 201, f. 349).

<sup>619</sup> Essex to Godolphin, 7 Mar. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, p. 58); Essex to Shaftesbury, 8 Mar. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, p. 59).

<sup>620</sup> Essex to Lord Clifford, 4 Apr. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 69-70).

<sup>621</sup> Essex to Arlington, 20 Aug. 1672 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 14-6).

<sup>622</sup> Essex to Arlington, 8 Oct. 1672 (*Essex papers*, i, p 34).

lenient inclinations towards Catholics.<sup>623</sup> It emerged that the possibility of such an agency was prompted by fears of breaching the Act of Settlement, based on scepticism as to Charles's ultimate motives.<sup>624</sup> Essex was aware that such fears were commonly held, for 'though I have ever since my coming into this country made it my business to confirm all men in the belief that these acts would never be in the least measure violated, yet have I always found that the generality of the English who enjoy their estates upon these new titles could not shake off their apprehensions of loosing them again'.<sup>625</sup>

Under advisement, he subsequently published a proclamation assuring those concerned that the Acts of Settlement and Explanation would not be tampered with, 'especially since the Irish do almost universally discourse that they will have there lands again'; there had also been vague reports that lands in unspecified remote areas were being forcibly repossessed by the Irish.<sup>626</sup> Essex, however, was acutely aware that links to English politics were vital to someone in his position, and could be used to exert an influence on his behalf.<sup>627</sup> In January 1673 he requested that Sir Arthur Forbes, a key military figure who was in England at the time, remain there in order to report back to him on any business related to Ireland, and to solicit supplies of vital munitions and provisions that simply could not be paid for on the Irish establishment. Ireland needed money, a reality that Essex was aware of, and which for some time had been a problem to be laid at the door of the farmers of the Irish revenue. Since October there had been complaints that they had retained monies 'upon pretence of defalcations', an issue that he had sought to deal with.<sup>628</sup> This was also exacerbated by trade restrictions: by February 1673 Essex was intent on securing private loans to pay for escorts for merchant ships, due to the deficiencies in the revenue; this was an issue that had been noted by Sir William Temple and which had prompted his treatise on Irish trade, dated 22 July 1673 and dedicated to Essex.<sup>629</sup> This was not the only problem, as Irish fortifications were also in dire need of repair. As for how such things

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<sup>623</sup> Arlington to Essex, 24 Dec. 1672 (*Essex papers*, i, p 47-8).

<sup>624</sup> Essex to Arlington, 18 Jan. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, p 49-50).

<sup>625</sup> Essex to Arlington, 20 Jan. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, p 50).

<sup>626</sup> Essex to Arlington, 25 Jan. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, p 52).

<sup>627</sup> Essex to Sir Arthur Forbes, 25 Jan. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 53-4).

<sup>628</sup> Essex to Arlington, 26 Oct. 1672 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 35-7).

<sup>629</sup> William Temple, 'An essay upon the advancement of trade in Ireland' in *The works of Sir William Temple* (2 vols, 1740), i, pp 109-21.

might be paid for in the absence of adequate funds from the standard channels, Essex concluded that 'I can think of no other expedient but the calling of a parliament'.<sup>630</sup>

This illustrated the interlocking nature of the issues facing Essex: the security of the Protestant interest might have been a priority, but that security had to be paid for. The calling of an Irish parliament was now a distinct possibility.<sup>631</sup> What was a reality was the harshening attitude of the English parliament towards Catholics, a perspective that would inevitably direct its attention towards Irish Catholics. In March 1673, the English House of Commons debated 'the danger that the Kingdom of Ireland [is] in by Popish recusants', and resolved to prepare an address to the King 'to represent to him the state and condition of the Kingdom of Ireland; and the danger of the English Protestant interest', with particular reference to Richard Talbot.<sup>632</sup> When the address was finally produced it emphasised the hostility of 'Popish recusants' to the Protestant interest in Ireland. Implicitly, it was a critique of the policy of toleration, but it avoided any direct criticism of this by emphasising that the Papists were bound to exploit it (and were in fact doing so), and 'the consequence thereof may likewise prove very useful to this your Kingdom of England'. It demanded the maintenance of the Acts of Settlement and Explanation, and the recall of the Commission of Inquiry into Irish affairs, along with the purging and barring of Catholics from civil, military, and legal positions. Catholics were to be disarmed, Catholic education was to be suppressed, and the Catholic clergy were to be expelled from the country. There were explicit demands for the non-admission of Catholics to corporations. Again, Peter and Richard Talbot were singled out for particular attention. Essex was also to be instructed to encourage the English and Protestant settlement, 'and the suppression of the insolencies and disorders of the Irish Papists'.<sup>633</sup>

The King's reply had referred to his 'ire' at Berkeley's putting Catholics onto commissions of the peace.<sup>634</sup> A surprising response to this came from Orrery, who was aware that the resolutions of the Commons, if implemented, would be provocative to the Catholic Irish on virtually every level. Therefore he bemoaned the weakened condition of the Irish army, for 'I cannot say this they will do, but I can say to your Excellency only, that 'tis likelier they should do something now than that they should

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<sup>630</sup> Essex to Arlington, 11 Feb. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 56-7).

<sup>631</sup> Essex to Arlington, 11 Feb. 1673 (*Essex Papers*, i, pp 56-7).

<sup>632</sup> *Commons jn.*, p. 270.

<sup>633</sup> *Commons, jn.*, pp 276-7.

<sup>634</sup> Francis Godolphin to Essex, 18 Mar. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 61-62).

attempt what they did [in] 1641; what they did then attempt we shall not easily forget...then they had no provocation; now they will believe they have'. It was a stance that was essentially unchanged from that revealed in his (uncredited) pamphlet dispute with Peter Walsh. The benchmark for the danger in which the Protestant interest was supposedly in remained near to hand. Consequently, Orrery demanded reforms and the resupply of the army, arguing that Catholics were in a stronger position now than in 1641.<sup>635</sup> He was not the only figure to consider the possibility of Catholic unrest: Francis, Lord Aungier wrote to Essex mentioning a warning from Forbes 'that since the Papists are fallen on by the parliament, he fears that they may grow desperate and endeavour to disturb the government there'. Consequently, he suggested that the army be put on alert.<sup>636</sup> There were indications that Charles would bow to the demands of the Commons for harsher measures against Irish Catholics in general, and Richard Talbot in particular, despite his apparent satisfaction with him.<sup>637</sup>

In these circumstances Essex was naturally prompted to reflect on the actual condition of Irish Catholics; he observed that John O'Moloney, the Catholic bishop of Killaloe whom Essex regarded as the ablest of the Catholic hierarchy, might be a 'pensioner of France', and therefore a potential 'mischievous instrument' should relations between England and France deteriorate further.<sup>638</sup> The stance of the Catholic clergy in Ireland had, at least since 1641, been seen as critical to the broader stance of the Catholic population. Equally, Charles was now actively contemplating the calling of an Irish parliament. In light of trade restrictions it may have been the best means of dealing with finance and therefore security, as 'since the war with Holland this country has been almost like a besieged place'. Other outstanding issues relating to the land settlement (mainly William Petty's unspecified assessments of concealed lands), and other matters, could also be dealt with by a parliament.<sup>639</sup> Essex also informed Charles of the opposition ('disgust') amongst the Irish nobility and gentry at the prospect of the Phoenix Park being given away and, in a deft move that might sway Charles's mind, Essex suggested that concealed lands could compensate the duchess of Cleveland (for whom it had been earmarked), and cannily suggested that a parliament would readily

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<sup>635</sup> Orrery to Essex, 25 Mar. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, p 64-6).

<sup>636</sup> Francis, Lord Aungier, to Essex, 15 Mar. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 60-61).

<sup>637</sup> Aungier to Essex, 12 Apr. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 74-5).

<sup>638</sup> Essex to Arlington, 17 Apr. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 76-8).

<sup>639</sup> Essex to Sir Arthur Forbes, 19 Apr. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 78-80).

provide a tax by way of compensation.<sup>640</sup> On the other hand he opposed an unspecified proposal of both Petty and Sir Henry Ingoldsby (a former Cromwellian soldier and governor of Limerick whose commitment to the restored monarchy was deemed questionable) to obtain concealed lands, and to pay the crown for it. Essex deemed this a licence for corruption and exploitation ('I am confident, in all his Majesties three kingdoms, there lives not a more grating man than Sir William Petty'). But it highlighted the outstanding issue of concealed lands, another question, which, according to Essex, was best, dealt with by a parliament.<sup>641</sup>

However, there was another means of political representation in Ireland that Essex was also obliged to deal with. He had devoted considerable attention to the aftermath of Berkeley's intervention in the politics of Dublin Corporation; he had no choice, and informed Charles that Dublin Corporation would inevitably influence other Irish corporations by its pre-eminence. While the recorder and aldermen involved in the dispute were willing to obey Essex, the commons of the city council remained mutinous, which was potentially a dangerous situation. 'I need not enlarge upon the danger that may arise from suffering the common people to know their own force'. He recommended the construction of 'a good citadel' to keep such tendencies in check, as well as for the more general security of the city and kingdom.<sup>642</sup> The reform of corporations throughout Ireland had been a key aspect of his instructions, and in August 1672 he had produced a set of draft rules for corporations, particularly that of Dublin. Essex was wary of admitting Catholics to corporations as it was likely to scare off Protestant businessmen and merchants. While also being wary of dispensing with the oath of supremacy,<sup>643</sup> Essex was soon reminded by the King that its application was at his discretion.<sup>644</sup> This would later return to haunt Essex when Dudley Loftus complained that Essex's order for Dublin Corporation allowing Catholic aldermen to sit, while abrogating the oath of supremacy, was illegal. Essex was aware of how this might look in London, and began to prepare a fuller report of his activities to facilitate his defence.<sup>645</sup> Yet concerns about Catholics were reflected in other urban centres too. Ormond was informed at this time of 'the insolency of the Romish faction' in his

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<sup>640</sup> Essex to Charles II, nd (*Essex papers*, i, pp 80-82).

<sup>641</sup> Essex to Shaftesbury, 4 May 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 82-4).

<sup>642</sup> Essex to Charles II, 22 July 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 108-110). For the details and broader context of this dispute see Jacqueline Hill, *From Patriots to Unionists: Dublin civic politics and Irish Protestant Patriotism, 1660-1840* (Oxford, 1997), pp 48-58.

<sup>643</sup> Essex to Arlington, 24 Aug. 1672 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 17-20).

<sup>644</sup> Charles to Essex, 31 Aug. 1672 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 23-4).

<sup>645</sup> Essex to Arlington, 19 July 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 101-2).

heartland of Kilkenny, some of whom were apparently 'so confident of the overthrow of the Protestant government of the city' that they had a standing wager that such a plan could be accomplished within three years; Ormond's interest was thereby being undermined, as Protestants were reportedly being forced from their homes.<sup>646</sup>

Any perception of leniency towards Catholics was dangerous to an Irish viceroy. Yet the contrast between this and the government's attitude towards nonconformists in Ulster was striking. In October 1673 Essex received complaints from Scots in Ulster due to their 'persecution (as they term it) upon the score of nonconformity'. Writs thus levied against them could contribute to 'the great disquiet of that nation, and hindrance of the trade of the kingdom'. Essex decided to investigate the situation himself: nonconformists were to be permitted a discreet toleration, being allowed to worship on Sundays, provided that this was unobtrusive. Essex remained aware of the need to keep an eye on the situation, and to permit certain limits to this tolerance. There were suggestions that in the north there were potentially 80-100,000 armed men, and caution might yet be required in dealing with them.<sup>647</sup> And such politic dealing was not merely confined to Presbyterians; at the same time Essex wrote to Henry Capel informing him of his high regard for Oliver Plunkett, and prevailed upon his brother to exercise some influence to shield Plunkett from the persecutions directed at him in the current climate, which was rapidly becoming increasingly uncongenial to Catholics.<sup>648</sup>

There were, however, difficulties with certain aspects of Essex's orders. He was to disarm Catholics according to precedents that were not necessarily evident. In any case the Irish army was too small for the job, and private malice could also prove problematic in encouraging false leads. Essex's alternative was to propose that arms be handed in to the authorities instead: a proclamation issued on 8 November 1673 offered a months grace for Catholics to hand their arms in to the authorities.<sup>649</sup> In addition, there was no general ban on Catholics residing in corporate towns; only on purchasing property within them belonging to '49 men, as specified in the Act of Explanation. However, he would monitor the composition of such towns closely, and would exercise his discretion as required. He remained acutely aware of the authority of Catholic clergy within the community, who were apparently encouraging boycotts of Protestant

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<sup>646</sup> Josias Woodcock to Ormond, 19 July 1673 (NLI MS 11,048, f. 62).

<sup>647</sup> Essex to Arlington, 12 Oct. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 124-6).

<sup>648</sup> Essex to Sir Henry Capel, 13 Oct. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, p 126).

<sup>649</sup> NLI MS 1,793, f 3.



traders. The shaky foundations of Irish trade necessitated further caution in dealing with this.<sup>650</sup> However, Essex fully expected Catholic bishops to leave on foot of the proclamation that had ordered them to quit Ireland. He remained concerned about John O'Moloney, 'whom I look upon as the most dangerous (because the wisest) of their clergy', who had previously provided Essex with details of the activities of (and disputes within) the Catholic clergy. His removal would remove a key source of intelligence, especially as Essex (like Ormond before him) considered maintaining the divisions among the clergy to be vital for security. He had already attempted to do this with the assistance of some friars, who now were to be banished, and he also sought their exemption from banishment.<sup>651</sup> One of these was the Galway Augustinian Martin French, who would later appear in the Popish Plot and who had previously given Essex useful information, and 'assistance to prosecute some of the Romish bishops'. Essex was prepared to exempt him from the proclamation and to protect him; he would be in danger abroad, and this would discourage other potential turncoats.<sup>652</sup> Despite this, like so many viceroys before him Essex's position in London seemed unclear, as he was now accused of being in league with Arlington, and there were also suggestions of his eventual replacement by Ormond.<sup>653</sup> At the same time, and possibly related to this, Orrery was in London, and was reported to be 'somewhat unsatisfied with Essex'.<sup>654</sup> However, there was another crucial issue that made Essex vulnerable, given the King's dependence upon and patronage of it: Ranelagh's undertaking.

The various branches of the Irish revenue – customs and excise, inland revenue, hearth money, wine duties – had all been farmed separately after the Restoration, and the Irish government did not intervene in them until 1668. The prevailing view in government circles, which had been shared by Ormond, was that the collection of the revenue was best left to appropriate and reliable private interests. Certainly after 1669 a bidding war took place to secure the lucrative revenue contracts, which were to be restricted to a period of 4 to 5 years.<sup>655</sup> In March 1671 a consortium headed by Richard Jones, earl of Ranelagh, proposed to Charles II that by limiting the Irish establishment to £172,000, they could pay the substantial royal debts incurred in the governance of

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<sup>650</sup> Essex to Arlington, 28 Oct. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 133-7).

<sup>651</sup> Essex to Ormond, 14 Nov. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 137-8).

<sup>652</sup> Essex to Sir Oliver St. George, 15 Nov. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 138-9).

<sup>653</sup> Conway to Essex, 15 Nov. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 139-41).

<sup>654</sup> Conway to Essex, 22 Nov. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 141-2).

<sup>655</sup> Sean Egan, 'Finance and the government of Ireland, 1660-85' (PhD, TCD, 2 vols., 1983), i, pp 163-75.

Ireland between 20 December 1670 and 25 December 1675. They also offered to provide Charles with £80,000 directly into the Privy Purse between 25 December 1675 and 25 December 1677, on the condition that the consortium would pocket whatever proceeds remained. Charles was in no position to refuse a seemingly alluring offer, and on 10 June 1671 the proposal was accepted, with the critical condition that Ranelagh, as the head of the consortium, would not be liable to prosecution should he fail to pay the debts off.<sup>656</sup> This was, essentially, a licence for corruption on a huge scale, but the canny decision to effectively buy off the king ensured a degree of security that would make Ranelagh a powerful and influential figure at court throughout the 1670s. In March 1673 Essex had pledged his support to the undertaking while maintaining that he would hold the undertakers to their contract. He was, even at this juncture, already wary of Ranelagh, who was uneasy at Essex's assiduousness.<sup>657</sup> In July 1673 Ranelagh had assured Essex that he was willing to produce the accounts of the undertaking, and had instructed his partners to do likewise, 'notwithstanding all the malicious information's of my enemies, we have paid out as much as we have received; and besides I am sure such an account will be a safety to me'.<sup>658</sup> Mentioning a proposal in December 1673 to discontinue the undertaking, Essex claimed to oppose this, given that it would disrupt finances at an unsettled juncture across the three kingdoms; changes in the revenue were better left until a more settled period emerged.<sup>659</sup> At this time though, Essex received assistance from an unlikely quarter: his erstwhile rival Ormond, who, whilst noting the secrecy surrounding Ranelagh's contract, suggested that Essex request an accounting of the undertaking.<sup>660</sup>

Essex remained concerned about Ranelagh, whose payments (especially those owed to the army) were continually delayed. Essex was aware of the potential dangers of complaining too loudly; he would either be seen as premature, or would actually be overdue in raising his concerns. He was also aware that the undertakers answered to no one with regard to their accounts, and he remained sceptical of Ranelagh's conduct.<sup>661</sup> This was an ongoing problem, but it was not the only one. Essex was also faced with the messy legacy of the land settlement, whose many flaws remained open to

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<sup>656</sup> Egan, 'Finance and the government of Ireland', i, pp 236-41.

<sup>657</sup> Essex to Arlington, 22 Mar. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 62-3).

<sup>658</sup> Ranelagh to Essex, 26 July 1673 (BL Stowe MS 202, f 235).

<sup>659</sup> Essex to Charles II, 1 Dec. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 146-9).

<sup>660</sup> Ormond to Essex, 9 Dec. 1673 (*Essex papers*, i, p 150-1).

<sup>661</sup> Essex to Arlington, 17 Mar. 1674 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 181-5).

disputation by the disappointed. Concealed lands, and their discoveries, were obviously problematic.

The truth is, the lands of Ireland have been a mere scramble, and the least done by way of orderly distribution of them as perhaps hath ever been known, which makes all men so unsettled in their estates and so unquiet in their possessions. And this hath been a ground for projectors to work upon; which, considering Ireland as a plantation (for in reality it is little other), cannot but be so great a discouragement to all people from coming hither, and to those who are here from laying out moneys on improvement.<sup>662</sup>

In seeking to address these problems, Essex was not helped by the fact that rumours were abroad of his impending removal. While Essex claimed to disregard them, he asked his chief secretary, William Harbord, to ensure that Arlington or some other keep an eye out for this possibility, and inform him if need be.<sup>663</sup> Harbord soon provided him with reassurance when reporting that 'Essex is by all the best men here in great credit, and will be so in despite of all men, so long as he promotes the Protestant interest'.<sup>664</sup> But this latter caveat was perhaps the sticking point: who could (or would) say that this was the case? Ranelagh, after all, was an obvious enemy and was in favour with the King, so Harbord suggested that Essex maintain the ongoing feud between Ranelagh and Ormond, who was himself apparently intent on replacing Essex.<sup>665</sup>

However, Essex was by now disgruntled in his post, given the continual rumours of his imminent dismissal. He suggested, perhaps wryly, that he would be perfectly happy to relinquish it. He had professed a willingness 'to do impartial justice to the Papists as to the Protestants'. He suggested that Arlington prevail upon the King for an affirmation of his favour, to discourage those who considered Essex to be on the way out.<sup>666</sup> Essex now sought leave to go to England to sort this out this problem; the example of Berkeley preyed on his mind, who 'was used by all people here, after they found he was not supported at court'.<sup>667</sup> He bemoaned the inconvenience, but was aware of the ongoing moves against him to procure his removal; Ranelagh was involved, amongst others.<sup>668</sup> But according to Conway, 'If your Excellency will take my word for it, you cannot split upon any other rock than by running a tilt at Ranelagh'.

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<sup>662</sup> Essex to William Harbord, 28 Mar. 1674 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 200-2).

<sup>663</sup> Essex to Harbord, 31 Mar. 1674 (*Essex papers*, i, p 204).

<sup>664</sup> Harbord to Essex, 7 Apr. 1674 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 205-6).

<sup>665</sup> Harbord to Essex, 28 Apr. 1674 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 219-20).

<sup>666</sup> Essex to Sir Henry Capel, 2 May 1674 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 222-3).

<sup>667</sup> Essex to Sir Henry Capel, 9 May 1674 (*Essex papers*, i, p 224).

<sup>668</sup> Essex to Sir Henry Capel, 16 May 1674 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 225-6).

Orrery apparently intended to do Essex harm, though unlike Ranelagh, his credence remained low at court.<sup>669</sup> Essex remained intent on doing his job with regards to his dealings with Ranelagh, but he bemoaned the difficulties posed by a lack of knowledge of the details of the undertaking.<sup>670</sup> He remained aware of reports of his removal, but was certain of his good standing with the King, and of the possibility of calling an Irish parliament. His preference was for a parliament before the confirmation of the new revenue farm, but this would take five to six months to prepare.<sup>671</sup>

But the rumours continued; now Robert Spencer, earl of Sunderland was supposedly earmarked to replace Essex.<sup>672</sup> It was also suggested that he would be blamed for facilitating recruitment for the French service, which was actually true (though he had done so at Charles's behest); however, such recruitment was not exclusively conducted on behalf of the French, as Spain offered another outlet for Irish soldiers.<sup>673</sup> In June it was suggested that any Irish parliament should be delayed; it was deemed preferable in London that it not sit concurrently with the English parliament.<sup>674</sup> Despite such murmurs, by September 1675 Essex had instead been issued with new instructions that, perhaps unsurprisingly, placed a great emphasis on finance. Monies and lands were only to be granted to petitioners on the recommendation of the lord lieutenant and the English lord treasurer, and these rules to be strictly adhered to. Public letters in such matters would take precedence over private; and the civil and military lists were to be paid before any private pensions. The letters for payment were to go through the English signet office directly to the viceroy.<sup>675</sup> This seemed to indicate a strengthening of the viceroy's control over the treasury, but in reality it did little to alter Ranelagh's pre-eminence, especially given the support Ranelagh continued to receive from England.

There are so many projects on foot to employ the Irish money for uses here, and my Lord Ranelagh for other advantages and aims which he hath, is so

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<sup>669</sup> Conway to Essex, 19 May 1674 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 228-9).

<sup>670</sup> Essex to Conway, 26 May 1674 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 231-4).

<sup>671</sup> Essex to Danby, 16 Feb. 1675 (*Essex papers*, i, pp 303-4).

<sup>672</sup> Harbord to Essex, 1 May 1675 (*Essex papers*, ii, p 4).

<sup>673</sup> Danby to Essex, 11 May 1675 (*Essex papers*, ii, pp 12-3); *CSPV, 1671-72*, pp 80, 101. In December 1677 the earl of Clare apparently offered to raise an Irish regiment of 2-3,000 men for the Spanish service, primarily in Catalonia, Flanders and Sicily. If they were provided for adequately, he offered to ensure that no Irish forces would remain in the French service, and he promised up to 10,000 further recruits for service in the low countries, albeit with the help of the gentry: Brendan Jennings (ed), *Wild Geese in Spanish Flanders, 1582-1700* (Dublin, 1964), pp 474-5.

<sup>674</sup> Godolphin to Essex, 22 June 1675 (BL Stowe MS 208, f 90).

<sup>675</sup> 'Rules and instructions for...Arthur earl of Essex', 22 Sept 1675 (*Essex papers*, ii, pp 36-7).

instant in promoting it...many attempts have been several times used to displace me, yet they have proved ineffectual, and I am confident will be so for a considerable time.<sup>676</sup>

Essex remained in favour of calling a parliament, especially on the grounds of facilitating supply. However, he remained uncertain whether he should actually do so: 'tis better rather to let it alone to a happier conjuncture than to call one and be baffled by it'.<sup>677</sup> He continued to bemoan the dilapidated condition of the Irish army and Irish fortifications, which according to Forbes was unprecedented, and which was inevitably related to lack of funds, and thereby Ranelagh's activities.<sup>678</sup> It seemed probable that Ormond was intent on succeeding Essex, and this uncertainty may have been exploited. However, if Essex could maintain a degree of fiscal rectitude he would almost certainly weather this storm for a time.<sup>679</sup>

Yet it was impossible to disregard the question of finance. By June Essex was deeply concerned about the condition of the army. Pay was nine months in arrears and soldiers were, according to Granard, being permitted to get work wherever they could in order to survive.<sup>680</sup> The army in Ireland was 'really in a worse condition than ever they were since his Majesties Restoration'; yet despite their arrears, they had not yet mutinied. Given that Ranelagh's new set of revenue proposals would result in further delays in cash flows to the government, Essex claimed that it had been stated to him by unspecified figures that such a want of money for the military had been an issue in permitting the spread of the rebellion in 1641; had it been available then, the rebellion could have easily been crushed.<sup>681</sup> This implicit reiteration of the spectre of a Catholic threat found further expression soon after, as Essex argued that the proclamation that had banished Catholic bishops, as stipulated by the English House of Commons, had not been in full accordance with Irish law, given that the Elizabethan and Jacobean penal statutes were never enacted in Ireland, nor did they refer to it. However, there was a precedent, as a similar proclamation had been issued under James I. The Catholic clergy were, at this juncture, 'very indiscreet, and over busy'. The loyalty of Pale clergy was seemingly assured, but Ulster clergy who had removed to the Pale prior to 'the last rebellion...soon had persuaded the old English to join with the rest'. There were

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<sup>676</sup> Essex to Sir John Temple, 22 Jan. 1676 (*Essex papers*, ii., pp 40-41).

<sup>677</sup> Essex to Granard, 7 Dec. 1675 (Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Granard papers, H/1/6/24)

<sup>678</sup> Essex to Lord Treasurer, 14 Mar. 1676 (*Essex papers*, ii, pp 42-5).

<sup>679</sup> Harbord to Essex, 27 May 1676 (*Essex papers*, ii, pp 49-50).

<sup>680</sup> Essex to Coventry, 17 June 1676 (*Essex papers*, ii, 53-6).

<sup>681</sup> Essex to Coventry, 18 June 1676 (*Essex papers*, ii, pp 56-8).

numerous dubious characters here, both clerical and lay. 'I presume it were convenient an eye were fixed on men so diligent and wickedly industrious, especially in these times, the Irish being so big with expectations of a change in Religion'. A friar in Connacht had also reported that copies of Nicholas French's *Bleeding Iphigenia* were being circulated, another work from his pen that railed against the dispossession of the Irish, and 'the people are so taken with it that in my opinion if twenty thousand volumes had come over they would all have been bought up'; it presumably had a certain attraction to those who had been dispossessed.<sup>682</sup>

By the end of July the issue of army arrears had provoked unrest in Drogheda, though this was successfully suppressed.<sup>683</sup> Little seems to have changed by December, when Essex complained that 'When I stir out it looks as if I were rather attended by a company of bailiffs than a guard' (though he claimed to be more concerned for the king's dignity than his own).<sup>684</sup> The problem of unpaid arrears was still concealed within the terms of Ranelagh's contract, irrespective of the new revenue farm. 'I am not of [the] opinion that the Lord Ranelagh's undertaking was so wild a thing as some men have imagined for I am very confident had it fallen into good hands it might have been justly and honestly performed'. Essex suspected that the undertakers had easily collected enough, if not more than enough, money to cover their obligations, but given the private nature of the collections Essex conceded that he was not necessarily going to find out the reality of the situation, 'but large sums I presume have been distributed at court'.<sup>685</sup> Again, finance was intertwined with security, as the continual official undercurrent of unrest with regards to both Tories and Presbyterians was reflected by a report by Thomas Otway, the bishop of Killala, who, having being tasked with dealing with Tories, remained concerned about Presbyterian activity in his diocese, and was intent on cracking down on wandering preachers who 'ride up and down the country like martial evangelists with sword and pistols, as if they came not to prate down; but storm our religion'. He had already apprehended one Hendry, who defiantly said 'that he would not only come to the assizes, but preach there...and that he would go to Dublin and preach in your Excellencies ears'.<sup>686</sup> The covenant had supposedly been revived in County Derry some months previously. Essex was inclined to believe that it

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<sup>682</sup> Essex to Coventry, 24 July 1676 (*Essex papers*, ii., pp 66-7).

<sup>683</sup> Essex to Coventry, 25 July 1676 (*Essex papers*, ii, pp 70-71).

<sup>684</sup> Essex to Henry Thynne, 9 Dec. 1676 (*Essex papers*, ii, p 83).

<sup>685</sup> Essex to Sir Henry Capel, 13 Jan. 1677 (*Essex papers*, ii, pp 87-8).

<sup>686</sup> Bishop of Killala to Essex, 22 Jan. 1677 (*Essex papers*, ii, pp 94-5).

had been, but had seemed uncertain as to how he should act.<sup>687</sup> These were the questions with which he was preoccupied on the eve of his dismissal.

Assiduous, diligent and capable, Essex had rapidly mastered his brief. Yet while religious policy was his initial priority, he had soon identified finance as a key issue. From March 1673 complaints were emerging about Ranelagh's excesses. Indeed, Essex proved more critical of Ranelagh himself than the actual undertaking, the efficiency of which he readily conceded. His Protestant reputation guaranteed him a strong position at this time, though he remained wary of Ranelagh, especially given the latter's closeness to Thomas Osborne, earl of Danby, and the English lord treasurer. But in the absence of any potential replacement as viceroy, Essex could put pressure on Ranelagh; the continual swindling of military finances, especially in times of crisis, proved a running sore. But in July 1674 his financial authority was curtailed.<sup>688</sup> By August 1674 Essex was aware that vice regal authority was being increasingly reserved to London. Writing to Danby, he observed that 'much of the business of this kingdom will pass through your lordships hands'.<sup>689</sup> However, he had enjoyed good relations with Ormond. While Ormond exerted influence in parliament on Essex's behalf, Essex in turn often deferred to Ormond's wishes. However, from February 1675 Essex had been openly advocating the calling of an Irish parliament, stating his opposition to the existing revenue farm in April and arguing that parliament was the most appropriate means of dealing with the revenue.

Essex retained royal favour despite numerous enemies at court, but in June 1675 he decisively broke with Ranelagh, and by September 1675 had been effectively stripped of fiscal responsibility; in this respect, the independence of his government was largely undermined. He had been aware of continual rumours of his recall and imminent replacement by a number of prominent figures, but his recall was seemingly inevitable by May 1676. Ormond sought and obtained the post, but had continued to support Essex in the meantime; his unhappiness at Ranelagh's conduct saw him attempt to curb the activities of the revenue farmers. Evidence of their activities is difficult to ascertain. However, throughout 1677 Sir William Petty, who had advanced money to the revenue farmers, entered into a lengthy dispute that would briefly see him imprisoned as he sought to avoid an extortionate demand for increased quit-rents when

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<sup>687</sup> Essex to Coventry, c. Feb. 1677 (*Essex papers*, ii, pp 92-3).

<sup>688</sup> Danby to Essex, 29 July 1674 (BL Egerton MS 3327, f. 75).

<sup>689</sup> Essex to Danby, 14 Aug. 1674 (BL Egerton MS 3327, f. 77).

he sought the repayment of his loan, though he eventually prevailed.<sup>690</sup> This may well have been a microcosm of their common practices, but Essex's constant inquiries into Ranelagh's activities had irritated the king, and Ranelagh now pressed for a more congenial replacement. However, Ormond had extracted from Charles a promise of reappointment, and was duly appointed lord lieutenant on 24 May 1677. Essex had anticipated his dismissal, and as a mark of respect to Ormond, declined to appoint lord justices, handing over the sword personally on 24 August 1677. Once again, Ormond was in control.

'After my Lord of Ormond had passed over 70 years in different fortunes, another surge of favour set him a fourth time in the government of Ireland'.<sup>691</sup> Soon after his reappointment, Ormond drafted an extensive letter to Sir Henry Coventry outlining his analysis of the condition of Ireland.<sup>692</sup> His traditional dislike of Presbyterians was once again evident. But he was aware that realistically, they could not be subjected to the rigours of the law without a corresponding level of repression being applied to Catholics. The resources to do either were scarcely available, and the economic consequences of such a policy were potentially disastrous. Equally, inaction by the government might simply embolden prospective malcontents even further. He suggested instead a continuation of the policy of de facto indulgence to defuse more radical and unacceptable activities, such as covenanting. Thus, Ormond recommended that the Irish armed forces be overhauled, with all available finances. He also inquired as to when an Irish parliament might be called. But in the midst of this, he noticed certain irregularities in the Irish revenues.

These were the issues that Ormond was faced with at the outset of his tenure. They had essentially been carried over from the tenure of his predecessor Essex. He was still dealing with them a year later when he would be forced to deal with the additional difficulty of the Popish Plot.

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<sup>690</sup> Marquis of Lansdowne (ed) *The Petty-Southwell correspondence: 1676-1687* (London, 1928), pp 15-18, 29, 30, 32-4.

<sup>691</sup> Gilbert Library, MS 109, p. 1.

<sup>692</sup> Ormond to Coventry, 4 Sept. 1677 (*HMC Ormonde, ns*, iv, pp 35-8).



## **Part 3:**

### **‘A damnable design’: The Popish Plot in Ireland**

## Chapter 7:

### September 1678-May 1679

Long before Oates's allegations were presented to the Lords, the original claims made before the Privy Council were deemed important enough to warrant immediate action, or at least investigation. On 28 September 1678 a sceptical Sir Henry Coventry had written to Ormond telling him of Oates's allegations.<sup>693</sup> This was particularly relevant given the prominent role accorded to Ireland in the claims, with vast sums of money allegedly promised by the French and the Jesuits to permit 35,000 men to rise in Ireland; a larger number than that originally claimed, which may have contributed to Coventry's scepticism. More personally, Peter Talbot had supposedly intended to have Ormond murdered by four Jesuits or by poison, depending upon which method succeeded first.<sup>694</sup> And

With this signal there was to be a general rebellion to commence in that kingdom and to be supported by the Pope and the French king...thereunto there was already a Nuncio sent by the Pope remaining in that kingdom and 40,000 black bills already there wherewith to arm the Irish upon occasion.<sup>695</sup>

The council ordered that Peter Talbot be arrested, and that gatherings of Catholics were to be observed across the kingdom; Ormond was to be kept informed of all suspicious activities of this nature.<sup>696</sup>

Given his long-standing reputation as a prominent Royalist it made perfect sense, in these circumstances, for Catholic rebels who sought to murder the king to kill Ormond as well. But Catholic insurgency at this juncture was the last thing he needed, given his intention to preside over a parliament in Ireland by 1 November. This had been his overriding priority since his reappointment as viceroy, but it was simply a means to an end: its primary function would be to provide finances for Ireland's dilapidated and under-funded defences. But this presented two difficulties. Firstly, how much money could be raised in Ireland? An answer to this would necessitate a full accounting of Ranelagh's undertaking, which, given its highly corrupt nature, was

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<sup>693</sup> Coventry to Ormond, 28 Sept. 1678 (*HMC Rep 6, app.*, p. 736).

<sup>694</sup> 'Notes by Williamson', 28 Sept. 1678 (*CSPD, 1678*, p. 427).

<sup>695</sup> Burke, *Irish priests in the Penal times*, p. 51.

<sup>696</sup> Burke, *Irish priests in the Penal times*, p. 52.

likely to prove problematic in itself. The second difficulty was expected to arise in parliament from amongst the disgruntled representatives of the Protestant interest who, after the experience of the undertaking, were unlikely to provide money to the government without something to show for it. As a sweetener, Ormond intended to introduce a bill in the proposed parliament to confirm the holdings of all landowners in Ireland. But this was also problematic: it was seen to implicitly favour Catholic landowners by automatically confirming them in their holdings alongside Protestants; conversely, it would also permanently close the still contested land settlement of the 1660s to outstanding claims or future alterations. Such issues proved contentious in both Dublin and London, for the strictures of Poynings law ensured that the legislation proposed by Ormond had to be considered by the English Privy Council before he could proceed with his plans. His intention was to have a parliament in session in Ireland by the end of 1678, and preferably sooner.<sup>697</sup>

However, permission to proceed with this had not yet been forthcoming from London, and Ormond's project remained stalled when news of the plot arrived in what was still a deeply unsettled country. And while he was expressly ordered 'to provide such speedy remedies for the obstruction of those evils...as he shall see fit' (with a particular emphasis on the expulsion of Catholic clerics from Ireland), concern was perhaps inevitable when Ormond appeared to take no measures whatsoever in response to the news of the plot, or even to appear in Dublin.<sup>698</sup> Certainly Michael Boyle, the Lord Chancellor, seemed curious as to the silence from Kilkenny.<sup>699</sup> He almost immediately apologised for having overstepped his mark as Ormond returned to Dublin after being delayed for some days in the south.<sup>700</sup> He noted to Boyle the threat against his life, wryly appreciating that his despatch was to be in the good company of the king, and conceding that there might well be 'an ill design one way or the other'.<sup>701</sup>

Writing to Southwell, Ormond observed that 'if Oates tale be true, the Jesuits have found a short and sure way to put me out of the government'.<sup>702</sup> Yet in this fraught situation, other factors within and without Ireland might also prove relevant. One was the more tangible reality of seditious conventicles in Scotland absconding to Ulster and fomenting unrest; on 28 September Ormond had also been warned to look out for the

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<sup>697</sup> Aydelotte, 'The Duke of Ormond and the English Government of Ireland', i, pp 30-98.

<sup>698</sup> King to Lord Lieutenant, 30 Sept. 1678 (Bodl., Carte MS 38, f. 718).

<sup>699</sup> Boyle to Ormond, 3 Oct. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv pp 207-8).

<sup>700</sup> Boyle to Ormond, 6 Oct. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 210).

<sup>701</sup> Ormond to Boyle, 7 Oct. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 211).

<sup>702</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 5 Oct. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, os, ii, p. 277).

presence in Ireland of one 'Walsh, the Scotch rebel'.<sup>703</sup> Another issue would be Ormond's increasingly vigorous effort to investigate Ranelagh's undertaking as a prelude to the financial demands upon the new parliament. For Ranelagh, an obvious way out of this compromising dilemma was to discredit the person who was the driving force behind questions that were causing him so much trouble. On 5 October the earl of Longford wrote to Ormond that a whispering campaign was stirring in London against the proposed fiscal measures for the new parliament (Charles II was inclined to listen to his pocket) and with regard to implementing the orders now being issued to all lord lieutenants, 'your Grace had need now to look about you and make wary steps'.<sup>704</sup> The onset of a crisis seemed to offer further opportunities for Ranelagh, for three days later Longford despatched a more direct and thus more helpful missive, stating that Ranelagh and his associates were planning to smear Ormond as being partial to Catholics, and that the implementation of his orders would be taken as the marker of his 'inclination'.<sup>705</sup>

The same day saw Ormond moving to take active measures. He wrote to Boyle assuring him of the receipt of his new orders, and to Coventry confirming their imminent implementation.<sup>706</sup> He also issued the relevant warrant and despatched a squadron of horse to arrest Peter Talbot.<sup>707</sup> This was the first specifically ordered act of the government as it sought to investigate the alleged plot in Ireland: it would remain the only initiative for some time. Talbot was extremely ill, a fact which Ormond was sceptical of, or at least chose not to be troubled by: 'However it is with him, he and his friends must excuse me if in such an occasion I am not over careful of his ease'.<sup>708</sup> Talbot was not unable to move, so 'his guilt may be the more suspected'.<sup>709</sup>

However, he was, in fact, largely incapacitated. Talbot was staying with his brother Richard in Luttrellstown, in Meath. He made no attempt to hide, but stressed his inability to undertake a long journey to custody. The arresting officer, Lieutenant Henry Brien, initially showed some consideration of this, but he returned on 11 October and Talbot was taken to Dublin Castle – being carried some of the way in a chair - to be

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<sup>703</sup> Joseph Williamson to Ormond, 28 Sept. 1678 (*CSPD 1678*, pp 428-9)

<sup>704</sup> Longford to Ormond, 5 Oct. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 209-10).

<sup>705</sup> Longford to Ormond, 8 Oct. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 214-15).

<sup>706</sup> Ormond to Boyle, 8 Oct. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 212); Ormond to Coventry, 8 Oct. 1678 (Prendergast papers, xi, pp 455-56).

<sup>707</sup> Warrant for arrest of Peter Talbot, 8 Oct. 1678 (Prendergast papers, xii, pp 583-84).

<sup>708</sup> Ormond to Boyle, 8 Oct. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 212).

<sup>709</sup> Ormond to Coventry, 8 Oct. 1678 (Prendergast papers, xi, p 455-56).

held in confinement without recourse to letters and communication.<sup>710</sup> In his captivity Ormond's attitude towards him may have eased; his antipathy towards Peter Talbot was obvious, as he had stressed that while the rest of his orders were to be implemented at leisure and under advisement, he fully intended to see Talbot arrested speedily (perhaps due to his long-standing antipathy).<sup>711</sup> But writing to Southwell, explaining his delay in acting, he assigned his first prisoner the role of a dupe, that 'Peter Talbot has undertaken or been assigned much the least wicked part of this tragedy, and that this is not the first time he has been said to have encouraged the acting of it'.<sup>712</sup> The difficulty was that nothing could be proven one way or the other, as nothing incriminating was actually found on Talbot. Apart from one seemingly innocuous document sent to Southwell ('This he took care should be found on him'), there was no hard evidence.<sup>713</sup> Such material may have been destroyed, but the day after suggesting this to Southwell, Ormond was writing to Coventry expressing his unease, as Talbot now claimed that the accusations against him arose from the malice of an unnamed sergeant. Somewhat desperately, Ormond suggested that someone should check the relevant warrants for the years 1660-62, when similar allegations had apparently been levelled at Talbot (presumably that he was fomenting a plot and sought to have Ormond killed), and Ormond suggested recruiting the Franciscan Peter Walsh, who had opposed Talbot in the bitter dispute over the Catholic remonstrance of the 1660s, to confirm that Talbot had indeed threatened this.<sup>714</sup> Even Coventry himself was becoming sceptical of the plot due to the lack of witnesses and hard evidence, and continued to inquire after Talbot's papers in the hope of obtaining at least some proof.<sup>715</sup> Ormond's enmity towards Richard and Peter Talbot was of long duration, but despite what seemed to be a strenuous effort to pin something on at least one of the brothers, there was nothing with which to incriminate them. One of his cousins, Captain Robert Fitzgerald, had informed Ormond that Talbot had appointed one Patrick Everard as his vicar-general, who had in turn begun to appoint dubious priests in Ulster; a hint of sedition, but once again nothing concrete.<sup>716</sup>

<sup>710</sup> Creighton, 'The Catholic Interest in Irish Politics', pp 255-56; Ormond to Coventry, 14 Oct. 1678 (Prendergast papers, xi, pp 456-58).

<sup>711</sup> Ormond to Boyle, 8 Oct. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 212).

<sup>712</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 10 Oct. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, os, ii, p. 277).

<sup>713</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 13 Oct. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, os, ii, p. 278).

<sup>714</sup> Ormond to Coventry, 14 Oct. 1678 (Prendergast papers, xi, p 456-58); Ormond to Southwell, 15 Oct. 1678 (Bodl., Carte MS 70, f. 474).

<sup>715</sup> Coventry to Ormond, 15 Oct. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 217).

<sup>716</sup> Statement of Capt. Robert Fitzgerald, 14 Oct. 1678 (Bodl., Carte MS 214, f. 339).

Interrogations were the next step. Talbot, his servant Andrew Bermingham and the superior of the Dublin Jesuits, Nicholas Netterville (both of whom were arrested with Talbot), were examined on 15-17 October, with Talbot himself examined three times in two days.<sup>717</sup> But the discovery of Edmund Bury Godfrey's body in London 17 October was a watershed. As a result, Ormond could assume that he would soon be under pressure in Ireland. Perception may have not matched reality, but the perception in this instance was deemed credible. Thus it provided additional pressures upon a government and a viceroy who sought to grapple with unresolved questions that extended back into the 1660s, and had been unsuccessfully grappled with by their predecessors. But such difficulties as were evident at this juncture were nothing new to Ormond. 'I do not remember any session of Parliament held when I was out of England, but that I was wholly alarmed by my friends of preparations and contrivances to accuse me'.<sup>718</sup> The office of viceroy was, after all, inevitably squabbled over. But in Ormond's case this difficulty was compounded by what could be presented as, at best, an equivocal attitude to Catholics. His personal history and career had brought him to a point where he was neither 'transported with fury against them...because some of them, and perhaps too many are traitors and murderers; nor trusting too much to them, because I believe some of them are good subjects and honest men'. However, he was quite aware that 'it may be unseasonable to profess such a temper'.<sup>719</sup> After all, the plot hysteria was exacerbated by lurking suspicions about the religious predilections of the king and the court. In hindsight, and with regards to the specific circumstances of the Popish Plot, it was perceived that 'to make Ormond a sacrifice, was a thing of highest merit. And nothing could do it more, than to shew how much Irish he was; what a favourer of Popish councils he had been; and how dangerous he still was to England in all these things'.<sup>720</sup> Ormond manoeuvred as well as any, and survived better than most, but the inescapable reality was that the Crown's enemies would inevitably be his. He had lived and served too long for it to be otherwise. And there would always be room for those who were simply his enemies, and his alone.

These considerations were as immediate as they were pertinent. There had already been whispering prior to the plot from Edward Conway, Viscount (and later

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<sup>717</sup> Examinations of Andrew Bermingham, Peter Talbot, and Nicholas Netterville, 15-6 Oct. 1678 (Bodl., Carte MS 38, ff 726-28, 736-7); Burke, *Irish priests in the Penal times*, p. 52.

<sup>718</sup> Ormond to Coventry, 30 Apr. 1678 (*HMC Rep. 6, app.*, p. 730). Also Boyle to Ormond, 28 Apr. 1678 (*HMC Rep. 6, app.*, pp 730-31).

<sup>719</sup> Ormond to Longford, 15 Oct. 1678 (NLI MS 11,971, ff 49-51).

<sup>720</sup> Gilbert Library MS 207, f. 13.

earl of) Conway, a significant figure in Ulster who was previously a rival for the viceroyalty, of Ormond's ostensible partiality to Catholics, and the influence of other, supposedly likeminded figures in the government.<sup>721</sup> Writing to Southwell on 15 October, Ormond already seemed on the defensive, concerned as he was about 'what may be said in refutation of the suggestion of my being a favourer of the Papists'.<sup>722</sup> Longford had already intimated to him that these would be the grounds upon which he was to be attacked and Ormond was wary of refuting such claims head-on; he complained of the toleration towards Catholics shown under Essex, and how the number of (titular) Catholic bishops and clergy had increased under his government, though he was loathe to make the point directly; an indicator, perhaps, of an uncertain standing at court.<sup>723</sup>

Ormond stood at the head of the Irish administration, and was bound to attract attention for good or ill, but the business of his government continued. The most immediate matters were the continuation of the examinations of those arrested on suspicion of involvement in the plot, the results of which were despatched to London and would be presented to a committee of the Lords on 24 October.<sup>724</sup> From Dublin proclamations were also issued: on 14 October a proclamation ordered troops back to their garrisons, and on 16 October another was issued ordering the suppression of the Catholic hierarchy.<sup>725</sup> Rather pointedly, it referred to the lax implementation of similar proclamations issued under Essex's government in 1673 that (rather obviously) had not been complied with. It made explicit references to the plot in England, and the possibly related activities of Jesuits in Ireland. Consequently 20 November was set as the deadline for Catholic clergy to quit the kingdom; after this searches were to begin, and the law applied to those unfortunate or foolish enough to remain and be caught. Or as Luke Wadding, the bishop of Ferns, subsequently put it

For we have a proclamation,  
To banish wholly from this nation,  
All Popish prelates with their friars,  
And send them to attend their choirs,  
To say their masses in France and Spain,

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<sup>721</sup> Conway to Leeds, 7 Sept. 1678 (*HMC Rep. 11, app. 7, p. 20*).

<sup>722</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 15 Oct. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde, os, ii, p. 278*).

<sup>723</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 15 Oct. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde, os, ii p. 278*).

<sup>724</sup> Papers read before Lord's committee, 24, 30 Oct. 1678 (*HMC Rep. 11, app 2, pp 2, 17, 20*)

<sup>725</sup> NLI MS 1,793, ff 23-24.

And never to return again.<sup>726</sup>

The activities of the Irish government – the arrest of Peter Talbot, the proclamations – were confirmed before the English House of Lords on 26 October, and the examinations taken were also presented. Usefully for Ormond, Ossory was appointed to the lords committee tasked with ‘the preservation of his Majesties person’.<sup>727</sup> Oates’s allegations about the plot would soon follow.

The proclamation of 16 October had been significant, as it was the first official and intentionally public marker of how the Irish government sought to deal with the Popish Plot. It had been issued after some weeks of intense political activity, stemming from both the disclosures in England, and the intense lobbying for an Irish parliament prior to that, even if it pre-empted the storm that broke after Godfrey’s murder. Now, however, it seemed quite possible that the disclosures would delay such a parliament even further.<sup>728</sup> But this phase of activity was confined to the governments in both Dublin and London, with Ormond straddling both. And ultimately, while rooted in broader issues, Ormond’s troubles were his alone. News of Catholic plotting was no novelty to Ireland, and in the light of the unsettled condition of the country there were bound to be concerns amongst Protestants throughout the country who finally perceived a justification for their habitual vigilance. The perceived stability of Ireland during the reign of Charles II belies the undercurrent of fear and uncertainty about the future that permeated the country prior to the conclusive events of the Williamite war. While they were in a reasonably settled condition, Protestant uncertainty over the position and intentions of the dispossessed Catholic community were readily combined with the memory of the calamitous events of mid-century to ensure that old fears remained alive, and were readily revived. And in the lack of any institutional framework within which to coherently express these concerns (such as a parliament), sporadic and intermittent rumblings of concern began to emerge.<sup>729</sup> Walter Harris of Dublin, for example, the owner of numerous lands in Wicklow, had been advised by two Catholic tenants, Walter and Thomas Eustace, against further investment in available lands in the county. They had previously urged it on him as a good deal, but now changed their

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<sup>726</sup> [Luke Wadding], *A small garland of pious and godly songs, composed by a devout man* (Ghent, 1684), pp 50-51.

<sup>727</sup> *Lords jn. xiii*, pp 303-4

<sup>728</sup> Ormond to Longford, 17 Oct. 1678 (NLI MS 11,971, ff 53-54).

<sup>729</sup> S.J. Connolly, *Religion, Law and Power: the making of Protestant Ireland, 1660-1760* (Oxford, 1992), pp 24-32.



minds because of 'some fears...of the French King'. Reminding the thirty-nine year old Harris of hardships suffered in the 'late rebellion', they assured him 'there were much sadder times at hand than ever'. Harris did not buy the land, but concluded 'that there might be some evil design of the Papists in hand'.<sup>730</sup> The assumption was automatic. Yet on the other hand, Peter Talbot, the most significant Irish suspect at this point, had apparently admitted nothing, and no more evidence had emerged against him. Ormond's government had opted for a low-key approach, and it was expected that Talbot would be summoned to England, and that the English parliament would investigate the matter thoroughly.<sup>731</sup> Over two years later, it would do precisely that.

This was hardly surprising. Just before the plot revelations came to light in London Oliver Plunkett had been concerned with the decrees of the recent Catholic synod at Ardpatrik (the first decree had been an instruction for Catholic priests to preach against Tories and their supporters, which was noteworthy given the prominence later accorded to Tories in the allegations of Irish informers), though these would not be implemented due to the impact of the Popish Plot.<sup>732</sup> As for Peter Talbot's arrest, Plunkett was amazed: the infirm Talbot was not ministering in any active capacity. However, Plunkett was by no means sympathetic to Talbot's plight. Writing to his superiors, Plunkett claimed that Talbot's return (he was terminally ill, and had returned to die in Ireland) would have inevitably caused trouble, not least because of Ormond's animosity. Despite this, Plunkett chose to remain in Ireland himself; he had not been mentioned in relation to any allegations at this point.<sup>733</sup>

Rumours were undoubtedly abroad, and figures with Irish connections such as Richard Talbot, Mountgarret, and Ellis Leighton were all apparently implicated in the plot.<sup>734</sup> More vague and sinister reports began to emerge over the following weeks; of dubious communications held between the members of the Connacht gentry with Germany and France,<sup>735</sup> of the presence of a Jesuit in Sligo attempting to recruit to the French and Papal cause,<sup>736</sup> and questionable rumours that unusually large numbers of Catholics were suddenly attending mass in Athy.<sup>737</sup> The recorder of Galway would

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<sup>730</sup> Examination of Walter Harris, 17 Oct. 1678 (Prendergast papers, vii, p 715-19).

<sup>731</sup> Michael Boyle to Orrery, 28 Oct 1678 (*Orrery papers*, p. 206).

<sup>732</sup> Plunkett to Tanari, 30 August 1678 (Hanly, *Plunkett letters*, pp 513-9).

<sup>733</sup> Plunkett to Tanari, 24 Oct. 1678 ((Hanly, *Plunkett letters*, pp 525-9).

<sup>734</sup> Unknown to Sir John Ellis, 29 Oct 1678 (BL Add MS 28, 930, ff 129-30).

<sup>735</sup> Anonymous deposition, 23 Oct. 1678 (Bodl., Carte MS 38, f. 715).

<sup>736</sup> Jeremiah Jones to Ormond, 12 Nov. 1678 (Bodl., Carte MS 38, f. 709).

<sup>737</sup> William Addis to Henry Benn, Lt. Richard Locke to Henry Benn, 30 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 256).

become concerned about the potential murder of Martin French, an Augustinian Friar, who had sworn treason some years previously against James Lynch, the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam who had been implicated by Titus Oates.<sup>738</sup> And the gentry of Queen's County suspected the captain of their county militia was a Catholic.<sup>739</sup> An obvious official response to the proliferation of such reports was to issue more proclamations that sought to address these concerns. A proclamation of 30 October ordered the expulsion of Catholics and recusants (barring categories such as tradesmen) from towns, and a ten-mile radius around them, along with the imposition of the oaths of supremacy and allegiance on suspected recusants.<sup>740</sup> Admittedly this was a reprint of a proclamation originally intended for the cities of London and Westminster, but on 2 November a specifically Irish proclamation barred Catholics from holding weapons (and anyone from holding more than a pound of gunpowder), and ordered that they be surrendered within twenty days, with searches and prosecutions to take place after this.<sup>741</sup> However, the response to the proclamation of 16 October, banishing Catholic clergy from Ireland, had been poor; indeed, it had even been defaced in Waterford.<sup>742</sup> Consequently, on 6 November another proclamation ordered all ships in Irish ports to firstly state their destination, and secondly to take on board any Catholics that were leaving; thereby removing any excuse for Catholic clergy to remain in Ireland.<sup>743</sup> Security was also increased in England, as the authorities there investigated prospective links to figures (such as Peter Talbot) who had already been implicated.<sup>744</sup> But despite this, Ormond's own opinion, even at this early stage, was shifting towards scepticism and caution. He freely stated that 'the alarums are many and great that we hear from all parts of the Kingdom', though he was already dismissive of what he termed 'affected apprehensions'. He was quite willing to accept that there was indeed a possibility that, at this early stage, an Irish rebellion might be in the works. But he was aware that, even if this was the case, it could easily be provoked by a lack of prudence; after all, he argued, speeches in the Long Parliament almost forty years previously regarding 'the extirpation of Popery were some cause or at least some pretence for the beginning of

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<sup>738</sup> John Shadwell to Ormond, 30 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 254-55).

<sup>739</sup> Captain Robert Fitzgerald to Ormond, 7 Nov. 1678 (Bodl., Carte MS 214, f. 328).

<sup>740</sup> Steele, *Proclamations*, i, p 443.

<sup>741</sup> NLI MS 1,793 f. 26.

<sup>742</sup> Burke, *Irish priests in the Penal times*, p. 52.

<sup>743</sup> NLI MS 1,793, f.27.

<sup>744</sup> Petition of Sir Robert Walsh, 7 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Rep. 11 app. 2*, p. 58).

that rebellion in 1641'.<sup>745</sup> Suggestions that he had been lax in ordering that Catholics hand in their arms was countered by his contention that a generous amount of time was required to carry out what was his own proposal, and it was not illegal for Catholics to possess such arms as they had. Equally, the dispersion of ill-disciplined troops throughout the country, while logical in terms of the disproportionate ratio of Catholics to Protestants, would weaken Irish defences while almost certainly being provocative to the Catholic Irish.<sup>746</sup> But despite the viceroy's opinion, concerns about the Catholics continued to be voiced, and the most prominent, vocal and consistent voice issued forth from Munster: Orrery.

His long and protean career was winding down, as stricken by gout Orrery continued to fulfil his personal interest in the safeguarding of Munster, where he had secured his Protestant credentials in the 1640s. Long before Oates had revealed his allegations, Orrery had been expressing his fears and concerns about the ongoing activities of Catholic clergy in Ireland, and the potential for the French to target the kingdom.<sup>747</sup> But recalling the proclamation for banishing Catholic clerics, he observed 'I never remember Ireland as full of those people as now', having been supposedly encouraged in their activities by a lack of any official reprimand; he countenanced now the suppression of schools, convents and nunneries.<sup>748</sup> In late October he passed a request to Ormond from his brother Burlington that a troop of foot be sent to Youghal, and Ormond, perhaps wary of yet another old adversary, obligingly offered a unit of his choice.<sup>749</sup> By November Orrery anticipated the imminent disarming of the Irish, while noting the large numbers of 'dispossessed Irish' in the country, along with the impudence of Catholic clerics who were supposedly conducting synods.<sup>750</sup> Such concerns were rapidly magnified by the surprise arrival in Cork of a number of Catholic Irish officers.

Ormond had already written to Coventry about the regiment commanded by Thomas Dongan, a nephew of the Talbots' and a future governor of New York. The unit had recently been recalled from the French service and had allegedly been responsible for some unspecified 'disorders'. There was no official complaint and

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<sup>745</sup> Ormond to Coventry, 5 Nov. 1678 (Prendergast papers, xi, p 257-60).

<sup>746</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 8 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, os, ii, pp 294-6).

<sup>747</sup> Orrery to Sir John Malet, 22 Oct. 1678 (BL Add MS 32,095, f. 121. Dates have been checked against report in *HMC Rep 5*, app, p. 318).

<sup>748</sup> Orrery to unknown, 22 Oct. 1678 (V & A, F.47.A.46, ff 31-2).

<sup>749</sup> Orrery to Ormond, 22 Oct. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 218-19); Ormond to Orrery, 26 Oct. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 223-24).

<sup>750</sup> Orrery to Southwell, 1 Nov. 1678 (V & A, F.47.A.46, f. 35).

Ormond was inclined to discount the claim, but he was well aware that the presence of such a force was bound to cause unease, being as it was 'wholly composed of Papists'. The problem remained of what to do with them; disbandment would simply create Tories, with the officers – possibly influenced by priests – probably ending up back in the French service, and in a less benign guise than before. Redeployment was an option, but for the time being the regiment remained *in situ*, as Catholic officers streamed into Ireland.<sup>751</sup> The numbers of dismissed Irish officers travelling through Chester had already attracted attention there; some were being detained and questioned, and at least some of these actually had commissions to travel to Ireland and serve in Dongan's regiment.<sup>752</sup> These officers were now beginning to arrive at Kinsale and were duly detained there; Orrery was informed, and insisted upon the further detention of those without commissions, that they might give an account of themselves.<sup>753</sup>

He informed Ormond in turn. Out of a recently arrived group, the officers were claiming that command of Dongan's regiment was now given to Ormond's nephew Justin MacCarthy, also recently returned from the French service. A commission to this effect had been issued on 1 October,<sup>754</sup> but 'more officers pretend to be of that regiment than will officer it', and Orrery was automatically suspicious, and paranoid enough to claim that all Irish Catholics lately expelled from London were on their way to Ireland.<sup>755</sup> The presence of the Catholic officers was causing problems in the locality, and preparations for the calling of a militia were now underway in Cork.<sup>756</sup> Ormond tried to reassure Orrery, while conceding the difficulty presented by the officers' religion; it seems that the regiment was being restructured, which would explain both the numbers involved and the confusion over whose regiment it actually was. However, he had no hard information on this, 'though I have lately desired and long expected it'.<sup>757</sup> In the meantime, however, two of the officers in question called on Orrery with their commissions to explain themselves. They seemed to confirm that restructuring in the army had delayed their receiving other commands, and that as Dongan himself was

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<sup>751</sup> Ormond to Coventry, 10 Nov. 1678 (Prendergast papers, xi, p 261-63).

<sup>752</sup> Secretary Williamson to Mayor of Chester, 9 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Rep.* 8, app. 1 sec. 2, 390b);

Depositions regarding Irish officers, 21 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Rep.* 8, app. 1 sec. 2, 391a).

<sup>753</sup> Capt. Francis Hamond to Orrery, 11 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 230); Josias Percival to Orrery, 11 November 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 230-31); Orrery to Percival and Hamond, 12 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 232).

<sup>754</sup> 'Commission to Col. Justin Macartie', 1 Oct. 1678 (*CSPD 1678*, p. 444).

<sup>755</sup> Orrery to Ormond, 12 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 231).

<sup>756</sup> Orrery to Southwell, 15 Nov. 1678 (V & A, F.47.A.46, f. 41)

<sup>757</sup> Ormond to Orrery, 16 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 236-37).

due to leave for Tangiers, the regiment was indeed for MacCarthy; hence the commissions. They also said that no more officers were to arrive, though Inchiquin's brother had told Orrery that 150 more were waiting in Bristol prior to making their way over.<sup>758</sup> Despite this Orrery seemed satisfied, and a decision was taken soon after to disband MacCarthy's regiment, though when and how were not yet decided.<sup>759</sup>

The episode illustrates Orrery's alertness and paranoia where Catholics were concerned. Despite what seemed a reasonably satisfactory outcome, he soon had another matter to see to; a newsletter from Dublin was being circulated in Munster and was causing consternation. It claimed 'one Mr. Fitzgerald of Connaught' had told Ormond that 'nothing could hinder the plot' which sought with the aid of numerous 'great persons' and the French to make the Catholics the 'masters of Ireland' by the following March. While not accusing anyone of anything, for 'had any such thing been, I know I should have had notice of it from his Excellency my Lord Chancellor', such professed confidence in the government did not prevent Orrery from inquiring after such matters on his own behalf.<sup>760</sup> Indeed, Ormond himself conceded the circumstantial proof of 'some wicked designs ready to be put into execution', while emphasising the existence of those 'honest Irish' who were warning their Protestant neighbours; given his previous record, Orrery was perhaps not to be trusted with a free hand where Catholics were concerned.<sup>761</sup> Presumably Orrery would have been more alarmed had he known that while he was concerned with itinerant officers in Kinsale, serious worries were emerging in London about French plans for Ireland. Ossory informed Ormond that 'the French ambassador [Barrillon] has given out that his master would see the Irish have the benefits of the peace the Catholics made with you'; presumably a reference to the second Ormond peace of 1649 which had been the bedrock for Catholic claims on the Crown after the Restoration, as articulated by spokesmen such as Richard Talbot. There were rumours of considerable French activity along the Atlantic coast, with both ships and troops being made ready. Ossory had asked the King to determine the truth of this and provide for Ireland's defence accordingly, though Charles, for a variety of reasons, had already proven apprehensive of an Irish parliament sitting.<sup>762</sup> At approximately the same time, a dubious letter to Sir William Talbot seemed to provide

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<sup>758</sup> Orrery to Ormond, 16 Nov. 1678 (Prendergast papers, xi, pp 491-92).

<sup>759</sup> Coventry to Ormond, 26 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 245).

<sup>760</sup> Orrery to Lt. Col. Meade, 28 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 245-46).

<sup>761</sup> Ormond to Orrery, 26 Nov. 1678 (NLI MS 11,971, ff 73-75).

<sup>762</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 16 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Rep.* 6, app, p. 723).

ample proof of the existence of an Irish plot for those who cared to look.<sup>763</sup> In what seemed an understandable (if insulting) gesture in these circumstances, Lord Dunkellin, the son of the Catholic earl of Clanricard, was at this time prevented at Chester from returning to Ireland.<sup>764</sup>

In any event more proclamations were issued. On 19 November another that reprinted the English stipulation that Catholic merchants and travellers be exempted from expulsion provided that the authorities were furnished with their names amplified the proclamation of 30 October. Another English proclamation offering a reward of £20 for the apprehension of Jesuits (with certain exemptions) was reissued in Dublin on 20 November, as was another barring Catholics of less than twelve months residence from towns, from entry to fairs and markets, and from gathering in large numbers.<sup>765</sup> However, the issuing of such public warnings, however stern, was not necessarily a vigorous and active policy; Ormond's own analysis of the situation did not require one. Despite what would be hinted at as a desultory public response, he was aware that the situation posed a danger to him, Catholic threat or no; he had begun from the very outset to take measures to safeguard his own position, and to keep himself as well informed about affairs in London as possible. In this he could depend upon a number of figures: his sons Ossory and Arran, Coventry, Southwell, Longford, and Wyche. In addition, on 23 October Ossory had written to his father stating that as things stood at the time, there was a good chance of keeping the influential earl of Anglesey well disposed towards him. Yet allegations continued to emerge: the earl of Strafford had claimed in the English House of Lords that the Catholics of Waterford and Dublin were 'strangely insolent', and more damagingly, 'it is whispered' that Ormond had not seized Talbot's papers: an innuendo that, by its nature, could be neither proven nor disproven.<sup>766</sup> Consequently Ormond advised Ossory to keep himself as well informed about Irish affairs as he could. He also recommended Coventry, Southwell and above all Wyche as vital contacts in this regard; he would soon be recommending Wyche to Southwell on similar grounds.<sup>767</sup>

The inference to be drawn from Ormond's manoeuvres was of a preparation to defend himself, for he was quite aware that the 'frights' of Protestants would be

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<sup>763</sup> 'A.W.' to Sir William Talbot, 17 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 237-38).

<sup>764</sup> Joseph Williamson to Mayor of Chester, 19 Nov. 1678 (*CSPD 1678*, pp 530-1).

<sup>765</sup> Steele, *Proclamations*, i, p. 444; NLI MS 1,793, f. 30.

<sup>766</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 23 Oct. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 219-20).

<sup>767</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 11 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, os, ii, p 279).

ascribed to him, despite his conviction that there was actually little to fear. He was uncertain, he told Southwell, of the eventual outcome, 'but I can assure you that the real or pretended fears of some considerable men, have put the common sort of English and Protestants almost out of their wits, especially in Munster, from whence the terror is diffused throughout the whole kingdom, to the great disheartening of the English and encouragement of the disaffected Irish'.<sup>768</sup> The final point was the crux of his argument: if no rebellion was stirring stringent action was superfluous, but such inactivity would leave him vulnerable to further accusation. If he was to take more severe measures purely to defend his own personal position he ran the risk of provoking the very rebellion he sought to prevent, but the continual disseminating of rumours could only serve to make matters worse. The delicate equilibrium of Irish society after the Restoration was amply revealed in this judgement.

By 11 November Ormond had become exasperated; what more could he do? He readily acknowledged the miserable state of Ireland's defences, and the capacity of the Irish to attack isolated Protestants, but this had to be tempered by the sure knowledge that retaliation would follow regardless.<sup>769</sup> The following day he had another opportunity to display his resolve; orders were received for the arrest of Richard Talbot (who was apprehended that day) along with Mountgarret and his son, though Ormond was willing to leave the aging Mountgarret unmolested for now, given his ill health. Ormond's main fear was that his counsel might be requested in England, 'which perhaps may prove the worse capacity'; in being kept away from Ireland, his control over events there would automatically diminished.<sup>770</sup> His analysis of Ireland proved constant, yet while he had carried out all of his orders he remained wary. Ormond was still strongly opposed to provocative measures, such as the purges and internment proposed by Orrery, which he deemed both 'unnecessary and dangerous'. Indeed, demographics dictated that the commercial and economic life of towns was dependent upon the presence of the Catholic Irish: who else could make up the required numbers? Finally, Ormond began to perceive the possibility that the various strands of events in both Ireland and England were coalescing, most likely to his detriment, for 'the

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<sup>768</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 6 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, os, ii, p. 279).

<sup>769</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 11 Nov. 1678 (Bodl., Carte MS 38, f. 659).

<sup>770</sup> Ormond to Capt. Mathew, 12 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 232-33).

overtures from my Lord Orrery were not directed to me but I have reason to believe they are sent into England'.<sup>771</sup>

Given Ormond's own view of the situation this could only exacerbate his difficulties; prudence might not equate zeal. His analysis was reiterated to Wyche in considerable detail the next day. True, there was a disproportionate number of Catholics *vis-à-vis* Protestants in Ireland compared to England, 'yet despite this it cannot hence be infused that we are at their mercy; on the contrary, I think they are more at ours'. Again, harsher measures were both unrealistic and provocative; even a small insurrection, he argued, might attract the attention and involvement of the French. He was scathing of Orrery and his 'ensnaring overtures': 'My Lord Orrery's ends visibly enough are to manifest his extraordinary vision and forecast'. Should nothing happen in Ireland Orrery was a loyal and diligent subject; should anything happen, he was also the correct one. And Ormond at this stage was quite willing to state that Orrery was deliberately scare-mongering to discredit the government (and thus the viceroy) in the eyes of Protestants, for 'I will not say that some private ill-will to some particular persons has a part in his propositions, or that he would be content there should be another rebellion that there may be another distribution of lands, but I am satisfied all he proposes looks very like it'.<sup>772</sup>

In this context Ormond would have had reason for concern about rumours circulating in London about rapacious Catholic troops prowling the Irish countryside, poised to attack, or that Dublin swarmed with Catholics while the entire munitions store for the kingdom lay unguarded and thus for the taking; suggestions of unrest that were, with the exception an attempted robbery at Naas, vigorously refuted.<sup>773</sup> More tangibly, one John Fitzgerald had been taken and examined about his alleged complicity in the plot, and a house in Belfast was to be searched on foot of his interrogation.<sup>774</sup> Yet Ormond might have had less to worry about than he thought. Wyche assured him at this time that his actions to date were considered satisfactory in London.<sup>775</sup> Regarding Orrery's allegations, the king had reassuringly told Ossory that 'he knew him to be a

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<sup>771</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 19 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, os, ii, p 279).

<sup>772</sup> Ormond to Wyche, 20 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Leybourne-Popham*, pp 242-43).

<sup>773</sup> Anglesey to Ormond, 23 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 242-43); Ormond to Anglesey, 29 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 251-53).

<sup>774</sup> Sir John Davys to George Rawdon, 19 Nov 1678 (*Rawdon Papers*, pp 261-2). It is unclear if this is the same individual who later emerged as an informer.

<sup>775</sup> Wyche to Ormond, 26 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 244-45).



rogue, and would ever continue so'.<sup>776</sup> Despite this, however, by being in Dublin Ormond remained largely blind to politics in London; hence his mobilising of contacts to keep himself informed. But such strategic blindness was a two way street; Ossory, when informing his father of an imminent purge of Catholics from the army, mentioned that MacCarthy's regiment was a particular target. While no decision had yet been made, he suggested that an account of the disarming process be drawn up for use in England, an indication, perhaps, of a communication failure of some degree. For Ormond such uncertainty could also ensure a degree of vulnerability.<sup>777</sup>

But he was left in no doubt as to the affairs of Munster. Geography dictated that Munster would be an obvious location for an attack from the continent; as early as May 1678 Orrery had written to Southwell with regards to the likelihood of a French declaration of war on England, and what could be done to prevent this.<sup>778</sup> He opposed the removal of the oath of supremacy in the proposed parliamentary bills, arguing that it was a critical marker in distinguishing Catholic and Protestant, while arguing that in the light of the ineffectiveness of proclamations against the clergy, sterner measures would be required. He busied himself with unspecified information about a Catholic priest who claimed 'that his Majesty was only king of the Protestants of Ireland; but [that] the king of France was king of the Papists'.<sup>779</sup> Throughout late November and into December he bombarded Ormond with immensely detailed memos and letters, outlining the defensive situation in Munster, the terror under which the locals suffered and his own vigilant attempts to safeguard at least one part of the kingdom.<sup>780</sup> Defensive recommendations and advice were prompted by the miserable condition of Munster defences, the alleged insolence of Munster Catholics and the prevailing fears of Munster Protestants, for whom Orrery was both unofficial leader and spokesman. From his perspective, such activity was ostensibly out of loyalty in a time of crisis; he expressed his sorrow that any should claim that the government 'wanted zeal and care for the preservation of the Protestants', but such claims might not necessarily be out of malice. 'Honest men, who love the government, being frightened with the daily alarms, may have thought that the remedies not being so hasty as the danger seemed pressing',

<sup>776</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 26 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 243-44).

<sup>777</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 28 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Rep.* 6, app, p. 723). A similar if more extensive suggestion was mooted by Southwell: Southwell to Ormond, 30 Nov. 1678 (Bodl., Carte MS 38, ff 662-63).

<sup>778</sup> Orrery to Southwell, 21 May 1678 (V & A, F.47.A.46, f. 5).

<sup>779</sup> Orrery to Southwell, 26 Nov. 1678 (V & A, F.47.A.46, f. 49).

<sup>780</sup> Orrery to Ormond, 22 Nov. 1678 (NAI Wyche papers, 1/1/25); 29 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Rep.* 6, app, p 733-34); 3 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 260-62); 10 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 270-74); Orrery to Lord Lieutenant and Council, 6 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 262-64).

perhaps even honest men such as himself; at the same time he expressed a willingness to clamp down on the rumour mongering that was causing so much concern.<sup>781</sup> But Ormond was not disposed to believe him: 'I will only say that if my Lord of Orrery did mean fairly he would send his remarks to the King and the Council, or even to the Parliament, who are able to put us into a better condition than we are; and not scatter them to the terror of the English and Protestants and the defamation of the Government'.<sup>782</sup> Nonetheless he acceded to some of Orrery's milder requests: Ormond would permit that the returning officers be deprived of their arms, provided that they were returned to them eventually. Such a token of mistrust was deemed more desirable than aggravating the fears of the locals. Ormond also reassured Orrery that the remodelling of the militia was to be considered by committee, as he 'judged it better to commit some errors which might afterwards be rectified than leave the Protestants under the terrors they were in, and the government under a suspicion of want of zeal'. Ormond stated his belief (perhaps deliberately) that Catholic clergy would remain in Ireland, while Catholics would generally retain their arms. This may have been to curry favour with Orrery, who was reassured that his own proposals for reforming the militia would be considered, though as matters stood the militia may have had authority enough to implement the proclamations.<sup>783</sup> Three days later Ormond warned Orrery to be as thrifty as possible when providing for defences to spare the Kings expense. He also mentioned that there was circumstantial proof, via Shannon and others, of 'some wicked design ready to be put into execution', but tempered this with a reference to those 'honest Irish' who had provided warnings to neighbours. Further discoverers would be rewarded, pardoned, and guaranteed anonymity, offers that would return to haunt the viceroy in the course of time.<sup>784</sup> Yet Ormond seemed deeply uncertain with regards to Orrery's conduct, given that he had yet to level a direct accusation about the viceroy's conduct: while convinced of Orrery's malice, how could Ormond openly question his vigilance?

At this stage paranoia seemed unabated. On 29 November Dublin Corporation ordered that all freemen of the city equip themselves with arms, as specified by law,

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<sup>781</sup> Orrery to Ormond, 29 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Rep.* 6, app, pp 733-34).

<sup>782</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 2 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, os, ii, p. 281); also Ormond to Southwell, 30 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, os, ii, pp 279-81); Ormond to Ossory, 30 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 254).

<sup>783</sup> Ormond to Orrery, 23 Nov. 1678 (NLI MS 11,971, f. 69)

<sup>784</sup> Ormond to Orrery, 26 Nov. 1678 (NLI MS 11,971, ff 73-5)

and lists were to be taken of those who did not.<sup>785</sup> A proclamation of 30 November offered rewards for information on Catholic officers and men in the army, hardly by its nature a reassuring suggestion, while Arran in Dublin found himself swamped by local fears as the discovering continued: ‘they never let me rest, but every now and then inform me of great store[s] of concealed arms, and private meetings of regular priests’.<sup>786</sup> From Clare came rumours of unrest, with Viscount Clare pledging his loyalty and service in the county.<sup>787</sup> Orrery complained to Sir John Malet that Catholic clergy remained in Ireland, and that Catholics still retained their weapons: there was a clear implication that the proclamations were not being enforced.<sup>788</sup> Despite this Ormond’s opinion still stood; that the real danger came not from the Irish but the French, for whom the Irish might be a useful if incidental tool. ‘I would not have them know the advantage they might take us at’.<sup>789</sup> Indeed, he was concerned that the French threat was not sufficiently appreciated in London.<sup>790</sup> Orrery observed soon after that the government were putting the kingdom into ‘a position of readiness’, which would entail him commanding forces in Munster once again, but in a grudging swipe at Ormond he observed that ‘I wish they had a better commander-in-chief, though I cannot wish them a commander who has more zeal for his religion, his king and his country’.<sup>791</sup>

Ormond argued consistently that repression might prove counter-productive, but such perceived moderation left him open to criticism on this very point. His growing impatience and mistrust of Orrery was becoming increasingly evident in his correspondence (though he was circumspect as to who he told it to), and he had been informed by Southwell of the resemblance (‘in style and matter’) of certain dispatches sent from Ireland to England with Orrery’s own missives to Lord Chancellor Boyle.<sup>792</sup> Ormond’s defensiveness about his Catholic background forced him to reassure Southwell – by no means an opponent – of his Protestant convictions, and notwithstanding family connections (such as his cousin Mountgarret) he would, as in the 1640s, do his duty as required; ‘those that remain I hope have changed their

<sup>785</sup> 29 Nov. 1678 (J.T. Gilbert (ed), *Calendar of the ancient records of Dublin in the possession of the municipal corporation* (16 vols, Dublin, 1889-1913), v, p 167).

<sup>786</sup> NLI MS 1793, f. 29; Arran to Wyche, 30 Nov. 1678 (NAI Wyche papers, 1/1/26).

<sup>787</sup> Clare to Ormond, 1 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Rep. 6, app*, p. 729).

<sup>788</sup> Orrery to Malet, 3 Dec. 1678 (BL Add MS 32,095, f 135).

<sup>789</sup> Ormond to Ossory, 30 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 254).

<sup>790</sup> Ormond to Ossory, 10 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 269-70).

<sup>791</sup> Orrery to Malet, 10 Dec. 1678 (BL Add MS 32,095, f. 139).

<sup>792</sup> Ormond to Wyche, 1 Dec. 1678 (NLI MS 4,846, f. 19).

principles as to rebellion, if they have not I am sure they will find I have not changed mine'.<sup>793</sup>

Implicitly, Ormond had not completely dismissed the possibility that a plot did exist, regardless of his scepticism. He did not seem to be alone in this view. The corporation of Waterford had already issued decrees to prepare for the defence of the town. Irish constables were to be replaced with English ones, freemen of the town would be obliged to swear to the ownership of their weapons, guards were to be recruited and equipped, and soldiers were to be quartered on butchers and bakers.<sup>794</sup> News from Holland seemed to confirm the existence of a plot in England, a belief undoubtedly bolstered by the testimony of Thomas Shadwell, implicating James Lynch once again in a scheme to kill the king, and prompting the lords to demand the appearance before them of Martin French, the Augustinian friar from Galway whose life was previously alleged to have been in danger for swearing to the same claim; Lynch and French had a history of such dealings.<sup>795</sup> Malicious rumours were, at this time, common currency in politics, and they could gain credence on the most slender of suggestions, let alone evidence. Ormond was well aware of both their potency, and of how easily such rumours might gain credibility: he claimed to be in a no-win situation where he would be blamed for the disorders of MacCarthy's regiment whether it was disbanded or not, while also having to fend off accusations of leniency with regard to Peter Talbot.<sup>796</sup> However, on 2 December Ormond and the Irish council ordered that searches were to be undertaken around the country for any Catholic cleric who had defied the proclamations and remained in Ireland. The pursuit of Jesuits was a priority, but the pursuit of members of the Catholic clergy was to be a recurrent feature of the period throughout Ireland.<sup>797</sup>

Some days later another proclamation confirmed the beginning of searches for arms in Ireland, warning officials not to be lax; and given that the militia had been (and always was) a preoccupation of Orrery's, who stressed the importance of it in his correspondence with the government, new commissions of array were issued for

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<sup>793</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 30 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, os, ii, pp 279-81).

<sup>794</sup> Seamus Pender (ed), *Council books of the Corporation of Waterford, 1662-1700* (Dublin, 1964), pp 178-9.

<sup>795</sup> Wyche to Ormond, 30 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 256-58); Testimony of Thomas Shadwell, 5 December 1678 (*HMC Rep. 11, app. 2*, pp 21-22); Resolution of Lords to King (Bodl., Carte MS 72, f. 422); *Lords jn.* xiii, p. 402.

<sup>796</sup> Ormond to Coventry, 4 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 261); Ormond to Southwell, 7 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, os, ii, pp 281-82).

<sup>797</sup> Burke, *Irish priests in the Penal times*, pp 52-65, 73-4.

Munster on 13 December.<sup>798</sup> Ormond and Orrery continued to trade missives, with Ormond sharply telling Orrery of his own belief in the plot (a belief also conceded by Coventry almost a month later in the wake of Dugdale's claims).<sup>799</sup> Despite this Ormond some days later was informing Orrery of his scepticism, given the time elapsed since the discovery and the lack of actual evidence; he also felt that he should assure him that he knew nothing of any plot until receiving Southwell's letter on 3 October.<sup>800</sup> To mention this in itself suggests a vulnerability, but Ormond may well have been attempting to mend his fences with Orrery; he stated to Southwell just after this that he simply did not believe there to be any rebellion planned; or if there was, it was the work of a very few, which could no doubt be contained if need be.<sup>801</sup> In the meantime Orrery provided John Malet with copies of allegations in Ireland: claims of professions of loyalty to Louis XIV, rumours of the impending destruction of the English, and dark allegations that Louis and the Pope had a plan for the Irish to 'settle us in a better condition than ever we were yet'.<sup>802</sup> Despite what were arguably defensive moves by Ormond (who was also keeping Coventry up to date on his feud and recruiting Burlington to get to the bottom of it), Wyche also intimated his suspicions about Orrery to the viceroy, suggesting that Ormond should draw up a report of proceedings to date to present to the King with an eye to deflecting 'private whispers or insinuations'.<sup>803</sup> Implicit evidence of the strength of such insinuation came from Orrery's brother Henry Boyle, Viscount Shannon. Orrery had told him that Ormond had been informed that Burlington had sent his plate to Cork after hearing about an alleged plot. However, Burlington had done this to protect his plate from his servants. No plot was involved, and Ormond was beseeched to disregard the incident.<sup>804</sup>

In early December a supposed plot to kill Ormond was uncovered in Dublin. Orrery expressed his shock at the discovery of a 'hellish design of murdering your Grace', the discovery coming as a 'mercy' not only to Ormond's family and friends, but 'to all loyal subjects in this Kingdom'; and none more so than himself.<sup>805</sup> He

<sup>798</sup> NLI MS 1,793, f. 31; Lord Lieutenant and Council to Orrery, 13 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 275-76).

<sup>799</sup> Ormond to Orrery, 7 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 265-68); Coventry to Ormond, 14 Jan. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 303).

<sup>800</sup> Ormond to Orrery, 17 Dec. 1678 (Bodl., Carte MS 70, ff 525-26).

<sup>801</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 18 Dec. 1678 (Bodl., Carte MS 39, f. 676).

<sup>802</sup> Orrery to Malet, 14 Dec. 1678 (BL Add MS 32,095, ff 146-7).

<sup>803</sup> Wyche to Ormond, 10 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 270); Ormond to Coventry, 18 Dec. 1678 (Bodl., Carte MS 146, p. 148); Ormond to Burlington, 21 Dec. 1678 (Bodl., Carte MS 70, ff 529-30).

<sup>804</sup> Shannon to Ormond, 17 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Rep 6*, app, p. 734).

<sup>805</sup> Orrery to Ormond, 17 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 277).

accused Catholic bishops (including Plunkett) of complicity in this alleged plan, and offered to provide a narrative that would supposedly prove this assertion.<sup>806</sup> Letters telling of it had been scattered around Dublin, and while a reward of £200 was offered for information, Ormond himself took it manfully as one of the hazards of the job; at the very least it was useful in that it might take the heat off him.<sup>807</sup> But Orrery provided a detailed account of the plot claiming that four Irish priests had instigated it, two of them were taken, whilst one had gone to France, and the other had vanished. The examinations taken in the aftermath seemed to confirm what Oates had claimed with regards to Ormond's impending murder. The plot was traced back to a clothiers apprentice in Thomas Street, John Jephson, who was, according to the letters scattered around Dublin, in some danger. A letter was found in Jephson's possession, which he admitted was intended for a Jesuit in Calais. After being examined, he admitted that for the previous year priests had implored him to convert to Catholicism, efforts that culminated in Jephson's being reminded that Ormond had executed his father in 1663, and had not guaranteed that he would inherit the family estates. The priests offered him an opportunity for revenge. Jephson refused, and was sworn to silence on pain of death. The priests were named as 'Plunkett', 'Byrne', 'Owen', and 'Reilly'. The examinations of the priests that were captured provided superficial circumstantial details that seemed to corroborate the allegation. There were no more conclusive facts than these. But the similarity to Oates's claim that Peter Talbot had intended to kill Ormond in this manner was a strong implication: 'you will find them very agreeable'.<sup>808</sup>

But there does not seem to have been any Catholic plot in Ireland. Luke Wadding reflected upon the events of late 1678 in a sequence of poems, scorning the allegations about any Catholic plot, whilst cursing the allegations of Oates and, once again, affirming Catholic loyalty to the monarch.

But good old times are past,  
 And new bad times are come;  
 And worsen times make hast,  
 And hasten to us soon.  
 Therefore in frights and fears,  
 Those holy days we pass,  
 In sorrow and in tears,  
 We spend our Christmas.

<sup>806</sup> Orrery to Southwell, 20 Dec. 1678 (V & A, F.47.A.46, f. 59).

<sup>807</sup> NLI MS 1,793, f. 32.

<sup>808</sup> Orrery to Malet, 27 Dec. 1678 (BL Add MS 32,095, ff 143-5).

Some news each post doth bring,  
Of Jesuits and their plots,  
Against our sacred king,  
Discovered first by Oates.  
Such plotters we may curse,  
With bell and book at mass,  
By them the time is worse,  
Then e'er we felt it was.<sup>809</sup>

The dispute with Orrery continued as Ormond openly began to accuse him of misrepresenting him.<sup>810</sup> Burlington assured Ormond that he had remonstrated with his brother, and that while Orrery's rationale was perhaps not as bad as it might seem, he would continue his attempts to find out his reasoning (perhaps prudently, Ormond had given Burlington command of a troop at Youghal, for which he was now thanked).<sup>811</sup> Nonetheless Ormond gave up penning yet another riposte to Orrery the next day, 'because I saw no end of the contest'.<sup>812</sup>

Evidence was now emerging in London of other, more concrete problems. It had already been suggested in early December, possibly following Shadwell's testimony, that the rumours and paranoia surrounding the plot were increasingly incorporating a foreign element, as the domestic rumours proved untrue.<sup>813</sup> This had always been an underlying concern; for example, in early November a scare about a ship bound for Ireland with arms was defused when they proved to be no more than a handful of Dutch fowling pieces.<sup>814</sup> But more substantial allegations of foreign involvement in the plot seemed to have emerged by now. Edmund Everard had testified in December to the existence of a long-standing plot involving the Talbot brothers to negotiate a French invasion of Ireland, and now amid fears in London of a possible French attack there came the claims of Stephen Dugdale of French and Papal pledges to the Irish, 'who would be found truest in that design, for the English would be false'. The Pope, 'out of his revenue had granted towards the putting [of] the Irish into a condition of opposing

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<sup>809</sup> Cited in Andrew Carpenter (ed), *Verse in English from Tudor and Stuart Ireland* (Cork, 2003), pp 474-5.

<sup>810</sup> Ormond to Orrery, 28 Dec. 1678 (NLI MS 11,971, f. 109).

<sup>811</sup> Burlington to Ormond, 10 Jan. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 299-300).

<sup>812</sup> Ormond to Orrery, 11 Jan. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 300-01).

<sup>813</sup> Henry Layton to Williamson, 9 Dec. 1678 (*CSPD, 1678*, pp 562-64).

<sup>814</sup> Anthony Spilman to George Robens, 1 Nov. 1678 (*CSPD, 1678*, p. 500); same to same, 8 Nov. 1678 (*CSPD, 1678*, p. 509).

the now established government, for it was his gracious pleasure to consider what a tyrannical government they lived under'.<sup>815</sup>

The official line in the *London Gazette* just prior to this was that Ormond had prudently dealt with 'all those that were suspected to design troubles in that country', and was arresting priests and banning masses with gusto while leaving Ireland 'in a very good posture of defence'.<sup>816</sup> However, perhaps in the light of the new disclosures, serious consideration was finally being given in London to the perilous condition of Ireland's defences. In late December Ormond had suggested to Coventry that the Irish army be bolstered by troops from England as they were freed up by disbandment, yet felt it was 'unsafe' to publicly propose it; the inevitable echoes of Strafford's activities in the early 1640s would no doubt make it unwise.<sup>817</sup> But just after the prorogation of the English parliament he had received a letter from Danby soliciting, on behalf of the king, his advice on when to hold a parliament in Ireland to deal with questions of security, for Charles's apprehension of simultaneous parliaments sitting no longer seemed to apply. In his reply Ormond openly suggested getting his twenty companies, whilst bemoaning the fact that Irish revenues were constantly siphoned into the king's pocket.<sup>818</sup> He may not have been too enthusiastic about the parliament by this juncture (it would probably be obstreperous) but defences were another matter entirely, and numerous assessments of Irish ordnance and stores were undertaken throughout January; for example, 1,000 barrels of gunpowder were ordered for Dublin in January.<sup>819</sup> The twenty companies, in Ormond's view, would serve as a morale booster through out the country. The only difficulty would be how to pay for them, as the possibility of an Irish parliament sitting was unrealistic (and impolitic) in the current climate. Better to wait until the king and parliament 'should be on better terms than I conceive them to be'.<sup>820</sup> Another proclamation was issued on 17 January, again corresponding to a similar one in England. It listed categories of people not to be exempted from the relevant oaths: foreigners, married women, and the servants of

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<sup>815</sup> Information of Stephen Dugdale, 11 Jan. 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 81, ff 488-91); Information of Stephen Dugdale, 11, 22, 31 Jan. 1679 (*HMC Rep. 13, app. 6*, p 122, 128, 130); Information of Edmund Everard, 21 Dec. 1678 (*HMC Rep. 13, app. 6*, p 141-45).

<sup>816</sup> *London Gazette*, 12-6 Jan 1679.

<sup>817</sup> Ormond to Coventry, 24 Dec. 1678 (Bodl., Carte MS 146, p. 150).

<sup>818</sup> Danby to Ormond, 30 Dec. 1678 (Bodl., Carte MS 118, f. 176); Ormond to Danby, 13 Jan. 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 118, f. 178).

<sup>819</sup> Warrant to Master-General of the Ordnance, 8 Jan. 1679 (*CSPD 1679-80*, p. 12).

<sup>820</sup> Ormond to unknown, 13 Jan. 1679 (NLI MS 11,971, f. 5); Ormond to Coventry, 16 Jan. 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 146, p. 153).



ambassadors.<sup>821</sup> There were also prescient suggestions in Ireland of emerging unrest amongst the Presbyterians of Ulster (though Ormond politely refused to be blamed for this).<sup>822</sup>

Despite this, Ormond soon found himself the subject of accusation once again. An anonymous letter of 5 February claimed that Catholics came and went in Dublin with impunity, and that Catholic gentry indulged in lengthy late night card games with Ormond and Arran in the Dublin Castle. It was apparently circulated throughout Ireland, implicating Ormond, Arran, Boyle and numerous others in a plot to destroy Protestantism in Ireland and in England ('and for the rest that it is intended you may read the massacre of Paris').<sup>823</sup> Ormond did appear to be the subject of a whispering campaign at court, based around Ranelagh and now Essex, whom he was reluctant to attack openly given his relatively tolerant policy towards Catholics when he was viceroy; once again an indicator of uncertainty at court.<sup>824</sup> But while other figures such as Shaftesbury would over time become involved in these machinations, such accusations pre-dated the discovery of the plot. This was made the more significant by the impending parliament in England, but there was also Orrery, who had been maintaining a diplomatic silence for some time and who was now told that while 'we differ more in judgement than in matter of fact', Ormond quite simply did not believe that he had 'been very candidly represented by you'; though Ormond cannily opened the door for reconciliation by stressing their common, Protestant interests, and by sharing information on a number of defensive issues.<sup>825</sup> Orrery, in response, assured him that he had deliberately cut down on his letter writing out of consideration to the viceroy, and that he never attempted to undermine Ormond or his government, and would try to make amends that he 'might live to deserve a less unfavourable opinion'.<sup>826</sup> Ormond's own emphasis on Orrery may well have been misplaced; true, they had a long and fraught acquaintance, but Orrery's fears seemed consistent, and were perhaps as genuine as paranoia would allow. Yet as William Petty observed, such

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<sup>821</sup> Steele, *Proclamations*, ii, p. 114.

<sup>822</sup> Massareene to Ormond, 18 Jan. 1679 (*HMC rep.* 6, app, p. 746).

<sup>823</sup> Unknown to unknown, 5 Feb. 1679 (*CSPD 1679-80*, pp 71-3); NLI MS 13,014.

<sup>824</sup> Strafford to Ormond, 4 Feb. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 318); Ormond to Southwell, 6 Nov. 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 278-79).

<sup>825</sup> Ormond to Orrery, 25 Jan. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 309-10).

<sup>826</sup> Orrery to Ormond, 28 Jan. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 312-13).

news as was abroad was 'not so much of plots as of counter-plotts, and of Papists prodding Protestants into plots'.<sup>827</sup>

Perhaps more significant in actual terms was that the king resolved to remove Ormond from his post as steward of the royal household, to give it instead to 'one I would gratify at the present with that place'. Ormond was required in Ireland anyway, and Charles was not prepared to brook complaints about 'any marks of unkindness in this matter because I have given so many proofs to the contrary'.<sup>828</sup> Ormond took a different view; how could such removal not be perceived as 'a mark of your displeasure', and presumably a further indication of his ostensibly weakened position? While undoubtedly aggrieved, an alternative might be to offer compensation of a sort to Ormond, to offset this perception and foster the notion that he gave the office up voluntarily.<sup>829</sup> Ossory, mentioning that James Cecil, earl of Salisbury, now seemed earmarked for the post, suggested that such compensation might be the repayment by Charles of £13,000 owed by Ormond to the English banker Sir Robert Vyner (a suggestion the king was naturally equivocal about).<sup>830</sup> Ormond duly returned his commission, but he was aware that such a loss of prestige, with its implicit hint of royal disfavour, could easily give the wrong impression: 'I have reason to expect all the attacks of the disaffected party in the parliament. The place I am in, and the principles they know I profess will whet their malice and their ingenuity to find faults with me'; he was eventually reassured on the point by Southwell, but following on from this was the possibility that the king could be forced at some stage to dismiss him.<sup>831</sup> Ormond was obliged to defend himself from insinuation. Writing to Longford he rebutted unspecified insinuations made against him as 'the most dextrous, and like to be the most mischievous' precisely because they had some basis in established facts: weapons taken from Catholics had indeed been returned to those with licences, and Catholics on business in the castle obviously carried weapons. 'It is true, I speak with some Papists in the closet, but so have all chief governors since the Reformation, and so they still must do, til it shall please God to convert the nation'.<sup>832</sup>

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<sup>827</sup> Petty to Southwell, Feb. 1679 (*Petty-Southwell Correspondence*, p 67).

<sup>828</sup> Charles II to Ormond, 15 Jan. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 401).

<sup>829</sup> Ormond to Charles II, 3 Feb. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 316-17).

<sup>830</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 11, 15 Febr. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 320-21) same to same, 15 Feb. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 324-25).

<sup>831</sup> Ormond to Ossory, 14 Feb. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 323-24); Southwell to Ormond, 22 Feb. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 329-30).

<sup>832</sup> Ormond to Longford, 3 Feb. 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 81, f. 180).

Throughout February there were further indications of impending French naval activity, in the wake of the treaties of Nijmegen that ended the Franco-Dutch war, that was possibly to be directed at Ireland, though by the end of the month the prospective threat was not perceived to be as serious as it had originally seemed.<sup>833</sup> Orrery, however, did not think so, arguing with some insight along similar lines as Ormond that the Catholic Irish would themselves encourage the French. He claimed, with considerable hyperbole, that the entire north and west of the country was disaffected, and Louis XIV's intention to maintain his army might force him to keep them occupied: where better 'unless in his majesties dominions'?<sup>834</sup> Orrery continued to vent his fears further afield: 'many believe the French design their army for Ireland'. He suggested that immediate steps should be taken to prepare for this eventuality, given that the French will almost certainly get assistance from Munster 'Papists', who vastly outnumbered Protestants. He argued that most of Munster's major coastal towns - Limerick, Kinsale, Cork, Youghal, Dungarvan - were vulnerable to French forces, whose impending disbandment would be an incentive for Louis to employ them abroad, rather than risk domestic unrest. All in all, Ireland was, in his view, the optimum location for a French invasion. It was strategically valuable, the disgruntled natives would welcome French intervention, and might even provide a ready pool of recruits to the French service.<sup>835</sup>

Yet prior to the easing of the French scare, Ormond still maintained - in the wake of a foiled plot by Dublin apprentices to break up masses, for which he would later be blamed on the grounds of his ostensible lack of zeal - that the application to Ireland of English penal legislation against Catholics would be impractical and imprudent, for both political and material reasons.<sup>836</sup> Soon after he found that he was indeed getting his twenty companies of soldiers, although inevitably it was up to him to determine how to pay for them in the absence of a parliament.<sup>837</sup> Nonetheless Ormond was quite aware of the dangers arising in England, on the eve of parliament sitting ('I think monarchy will not be struck at the root, but I fear it will be very close lopped').<sup>838</sup>

<sup>833</sup> Coventry to Ormond, 4 Feb. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 317-18), same to same, 11 Feb. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 322); same to same, 28 Feb. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 335); Brisbane to Coventry, 25 Feb. 1679 (*HMC Rep. 4, app*, p. 243).

<sup>834</sup> Orrery to Boyle, 28 Feb. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 336-38).

<sup>835</sup> Orrery to Primate Parker, 28 Feb. 1679 (BL Add MS 21,135, ff 62-3).

<sup>836</sup> Ormond to Coventry, 17 Feb. 1679 (Prendergast papers, xi, p 267-69); Richard Aldworth to Ormond, 3 Mar. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 340-41).

<sup>837</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 25 Feb. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 333).

<sup>838</sup> Ormond to George Mathew, 1 Mar. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, p. 340).

Paradoxically, preparations for an Irish parliament began to receive a new impetus around this time, perhaps due to optimism regarding its impending English counterpart. Confirmation of the decrees of the court of claims, amongst other things, was deemed essential, but Irish defences were the main priority for the government, with the mooted creation of a 10,000 strong standing army to remove the reliance on local and Scottish militias and levies. Considerable revenues would be required – which again brought up the question of Ranelagh’s accounts – but guarantees were to be given that these would only be spent on defence. Ormond remained aware of the difficulties presented by the confirmation bill, and suggested that the rationale for setting up a standing army not be disclosed; the confirmation bill was arguably too generous to Catholics, while memories of Strafford’s army of 1640-41 may have prompted discretion. Twenty extra companies could only achieve so much; the ideal situation for security might simply be the presence of more Protestants in Ireland, as little could be done to reduce the Catholics, but plainly this was not a realistic option.<sup>839</sup> But again money was the problem; in the absence of a parliament in Dublin, Ormond was of the opinion that little more could be done. Therefore, waiting for an improvement in the disposition of English politics would be prudent for all concerned.<sup>840</sup>

In the meantime, Michael Boyle rebutted Orrery’s concerns, in what seemed to be a statement of the government’s position. The French preparations were probably – though not definitely – for a purpose other than invading Ireland. While some matters, such as the banishing of clergy, might require further attention, Irish defences were as good as both resources and intelligence would permit at this time.<sup>841</sup> Despite this, dubious claims continued to emerge of French designs on Scotland and Ulster, and of the imminent arrival in Ireland of ships laden with weapons.<sup>842</sup> The accusations that had come to light in February against Ormond, Arran and Boyle had been circulating in the southeast, and were now forwarded to Dublin.<sup>843</sup> Informed, as he was of proceedings in the English parliament, it now appeared that Ormond was being openly slandered there. He stoutly defended his actions since the onset of the Popish Plot, ‘which seemed to me and the whole council to be properest for the preservation of the Crown and Protestant

<sup>839</sup> Coventry to Ormond, 1 Mar. 1679 (*HMC Rep. 6, app*, p. 729); Ormond to Coventry, 17 Mar. 1679 (*HMC Rep. 6, app*, pp 729-30); Ormond to Wyche, 7 March 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 70, f. 537).

<sup>840</sup> Ormond to Lord Treasurer, 7 Mar. 1679 (NLI MS 11,971, ff 5-6).

<sup>841</sup> Boyle to Orrery, 8 Mar. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 350-53).

<sup>842</sup> J. Brisbane to Danby, 19 Mar. 1679 (*HMC Rep. 14, app. 9*, pp 403-4); Information of Matthew Fox, 19 Mar. 1679 (NAI Wyche papers, 1/1/31).

<sup>843</sup> ‘Anonymous accusations against Ormond’, 20 Mar. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 361-64). Also NLI MS. 13,014.

interest (which certainly are the same) have been misconstrued, and fault found with them'.<sup>844</sup> He himself was concerned at claims by unspecified politicians that he himself was a Papist and that 'by very pregnant consequence with having knowledge and being party to the plot and though this be against all sense and Mr Oates's evidence (which ought not to be brought in question) yet I think the libeller an honester man than the politician'; he also denied setting up a Catholic school in Kilkenny.<sup>845</sup> 'I am here in my old station, pelted on at all hands; time was I was some where believed too much an enemy to the French and papists, now I am said to be absolutely at their service, but I feel myself just as I was'.<sup>846</sup> And while he might scorn such allegations, he could also request Ossory to suggest that the king mobilize support for Ormond in the commons, 'to get me fair play'. Ireland seemed increasingly wearisome, 'yet I would not be thought unfit for it on the grounds that may be given for my removal'.<sup>847</sup> Ranelagh was also becoming vocal again, seemingly with a scheme to pay for Ireland's new troops without a parliament.<sup>848</sup> Finally, Ireland itself was being taken up as an issue by others in the English parliament; Strafford and Halifax had expressed unease, and it was being suggested that the Irish government (and by extension the viceroy) were 'too indulgent to Papists'.<sup>849</sup> Indeed, an Irish parliament might not now be a good idea; subsistence measures might be far less trouble.

A few days later Ossory clashed with Shaftesbury in the English House of Lords, and subsequently provided an account of the Irish governments conduct as it had sought to deal with the Popish Plot. This statement, as discussed in chapter 3, arguably ended a discrete phase; its entire purpose was to offer a defence of the Irish government in a rapidly deteriorating English political situation. Ever since the first disclosures came to light, Ormond had been subject to a variety of pressures as a whispering campaign was mounted against him at court. It had its antecedents prior to the disclosure of the plot, in his plans for the government, and most especially for the revenue; the plot simply provided a pretext for those, such as Ranelagh, who were potentially vulnerable in the face of such policies. This pressure was intensified by a number of factors. Ormond's

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<sup>844</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 20 Mar. 1679 (Thomas Carte, *History of the life of James, first duke of Ormond* (2nd ed., 6 vols, Oxford 1851), v, p. 137).

<sup>845</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 20 Mar. 1679 (BL Add MS 21,484, ff 29-30).

<sup>846</sup> Ormond to Col. Edward Cooke, 20 Mar. 1679 (*HMC Rep. 6, app.*, p. 740).

<sup>847</sup> Ormond to Ossory, 20 Mar. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 364-65).

<sup>848</sup> Ormond to Ossory, 22 Mar. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 365-6).

<sup>849</sup> Col. Edward Cooke to Ormond, 22 Mar. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, iv, pp 368-71).

absence from London automatically ensured his ignorance, despite his best attempts to keep himself informed. The policy he chose did not look good, suggesting a leniency towards Catholics that was easily magnified into outright sympathy. Equally, there was neither a basis nor a facility for the outright repression demanded by some figures in Ireland and England.

Such whisperings magnified Ormond's fears, with his almost obsessive, and perhaps mistaken, emphasis upon Orrery's alleged malice. But what he seemed to view as a holding position in Ireland might prove impossible to sustain in the downward spiral of English politics, as the plot refused to fade away. The paradox was that as the plot hysteria intensified, his position would have to be maintained to prevent what it allegedly presaged. The beginning of the first exclusion parliament in England ensured the centrality of Irish affairs to the question of England's own safety; and this question, after all, was both the pretext and the rationale for the hysteria of the Popish plot.

In the meantime the Irish government continued to conduct its business. The day after Ossory's response to Shaftesbury in the lords, two proclamations were issued in Dublin, one offering rewards for information leading to the arrest of Catholic clergy (£10 for a bishop or Jesuit and £5 for the remainder),<sup>850</sup> and the other ordering the internment of the families of Tories, and the automatic arrest and transportation of priests in areas of Tory activity; an explicit linking of the two.<sup>851</sup> Conveniently enough, news of both was officially printed in London, presumably for the benefit of the sceptical.<sup>852</sup> Yet in the wake of Ossory's speech, and in the absence of sinister events in Ireland, there was a discernible shift in emphasis towards politics in London, in both court and parliament.

Certainly Ormond believed that Shaftesbury was acting against him at this time; he had apparently done so in the past, 'but then I was not Frenchman enough'. He was equally aware that he would become especially vulnerable if it were known that York had secured his appointment as viceroy; the fickle nature of English politics weighed heavily upon his mind, though the appointment of Essex to the treasury seemed to provide at least some respite, removing as it did one contender for his position.<sup>853</sup>

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<sup>850</sup> NLI MS 1,793, f. 35

<sup>851</sup> Steele, *Proclamations*, ii, p. 144.

<sup>852</sup> *London Gazette*, 7-10 Apr. 1679; 10-14 Apr. 1679.

<sup>853</sup> Ormond to Ossory, 31 March 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 13-15); Ormond to Essex, 7 Apr. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 33-34).

Despite this, even at this stage Shaftesbury was identified as a major threat, and there were already suggestions of his willingness to procure witnesses and testimony.<sup>854</sup> In Dublin, Petty observed that ‘the news we have of the parliaments zeal to defend Ireland against the Pope and king of France is very grateful to many, and I find there are several clubs and meetings to draw up advices to be sent for England upon that account’.<sup>855</sup>

On 4 April Ormond and the Irish council ordered that Catholic worship be suppressed in all Irish cities and towns.<sup>856</sup> Such heightened awareness was not matched by the reality of events. Amidst this no one seemed to notice Peter Talbot, as the alleged conspirator lay dying in Dublin Castle, his pleading for a priest on his deathbed throwing the allegations against him into stark relief.<sup>857</sup> Indeed the paucity of subversive activity can be seen in the attention garnered by a single incident: one John Totty, one of the Mayor’s officers in Dublin, had attempted to break up what he thought was a mass and was later assaulted for his trouble. A proclamation was later issued seeking information about this, but this minor incident was magnified and reported in both Lisburn and London, complete with comparisons to the fate of Edmund Bury Godfrey.<sup>858</sup> But by 12 April Ormond could claim that all ‘mass-houses’ in Dublin had been suppressed.<sup>859</sup> It was noted that Ormond had reacted to measures passed in the English parliament with regards to Catholic ownership of weapons and their continued presence in towns. Orrery remained fearful that domestic unrest in England over the exclusion issue would give encouragement to Irish Catholics, and was no less concerned about the possibility of a French invasion.<sup>860</sup> Sheriffs in Dublin were ordered to crack down on surreptitious Catholic worship. But these pressures were not necessarily prompted by tangible problems; pressure from London and the assault on Totty were enough.<sup>861</sup> The latter seems to have been an isolated incident, but in the absence of actual events on which to base fears, some would seek to whip up and

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<sup>854</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 5 Apr. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 29-30).

<sup>855</sup> Petty to Southwell, 8 Apr. 1679 (*Petty-Southwell Correspondence*, p. 73)

<sup>856</sup> Burke, *Irish priests in the Penal times*, p. 67.

<sup>857</sup> Peter Talbot to Ormond, 11 Apr. 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 38, f. 693).

<sup>858</sup> George Rawdon to Conway, 8 Apr. 1679 (PRO SP 63/339/9); Steele, *Proclamations*, ii, p. 114; *London Gazette*, 21-24 Apr. 1679.

<sup>859</sup> Burke, *Irish priests in the Penal times*, p. 68.

<sup>860</sup> Orrery to Southwell, 8 Apr. 1679 (BL Add MS 34,274, f. 140); Orrery to Malet, 8 Apr. 1679 (BL Add MS 32,095, f. 174)

<sup>861</sup> Rawdon to Conway, 8 Apr. 1679 (PRO SP 63/339/9); Order of Lord Lieutenant and Council, 11 April 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 70, f. 541).

perpetuate such fears. Richard Cox in Cork, for example, took the view that things were too quiet, and

Being a sincere Protestant and a good Englishman, I could not be silent when I thought all was at stake, but took an opportunity to express my zeale *pro aris et focis* in an elaborate charge which (being chairman) I gave at the Quarter-Sessions, held for the county of Cork, at Bandon, in April 1679, at a critical season when the Popish plot began to be ridiculed. It will not be vain to say, that I did it with that spirit and good sense that mightily animated the Protestants, and as highly provoked the Papists.<sup>862</sup>

Precisely what the 'elaborate charge' was remains obscure. But his claim (admittedly decades after the fact) that 'I thought all was at stake' is telling, and suggestive of genuine fear for Protestant security in Munster. Some might disagree as to precisely where the real threat came from: one Lieutenant John Dancer was accused of declaring Oates's allegations to be 'a damned Presbyterian Plot' whilst in a house in Kinsale in April 1679 (though the fact that he was subsequently promoted suggests that little more came of this).<sup>863</sup> Indeed, the broader question of whether Ireland's security was actually in such dire straits soon arose again; Orrery continually implored Robert Southwell to keep him informed about French intentions towards Ireland, and about any preparations being made for the safeguarding of the Irish coast.<sup>864</sup> £40 was to be collected in Galway for the erection of a new gatehouse at the bridge gate, and Ormond was to be provided with the names of those who had signed certificates for Catholics without permission.<sup>865</sup> On the other hand, the arrest and seizure of ships in Dublin was discouraging trade, and it was suggested that this be dealt with.<sup>866</sup> This was not the first time that security restrictions were seen to inhibit the Irish economy, nor would it be the last; it seemed to be, as time went on, an increasingly groundless financial sacrifice. But given the lack of actual events to prove the reality of Catholic plotting in Ireland, the perennial attempts to undermine the viceroy began in earnest again.

Once again, Ormond tried to steer a prudent path. He warmly congratulated Essex on the latter's appointment to the treasury.<sup>867</sup> But rumblings of discontent about his conduct in Ireland, and of others such as Lord Chancellor Boyle, continued to

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<sup>862</sup> Richard Caulfield (ed), *Autobiography of the Rt. Hon. Sir Richard Cox, Bart.* (London, 1860), p 11

<sup>863</sup> J.D. Davies, 'More light on Irishmen in the Stuart Navy, 1660-90', *The Irish Sword*, xvi (1986), p. 326.

<sup>864</sup> Orrery to Southwell, 22 Apr. 1679 (BL Add MS 34,079, f. 40)

<sup>865</sup> 17 Apr. 1679 (Martin J. Blake, 'Galway Corporation Book B', *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, 2 (1907-8), p. 91)

<sup>866</sup> W. Blathwayt to Henry Guy, 23 Apr. 1679 (PRO SP 63/339/11-12).

<sup>867</sup> Ormond to Essex, 7 Apr. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 33-34).



emerge.<sup>868</sup> Ormond's Catholic cousin, Colonel John Fitzpatrick, became the subject of controversy throughout April and May, and in May a James and Joanna Gurney reported that a neighbour of theirs had declaimed that 'my Lord Duke was a rogue and deserved to be hanged'.<sup>869</sup> Having been ordered to leave Dublin by the king (following an address by the Lords), Fitzpatrick had become the focus of a smear campaign by Essex and Shaftesbury that was also extended to Boyle.<sup>870</sup> Such an attack on Fitzpatrick would inevitably rebound on Ormond, but despite this he remained 'parliament proof'; his proceedings in Ireland were, it seems, meeting with approval in London.<sup>871</sup> But this did not alleviate the hostility towards Fitzpatrick, which precluded any vigorous campaign by Ormond in his defence. The best that could be done was to threaten Shaftesbury with evidence of his own previous goodwill towards Fitzpatrick.<sup>872</sup> Nonetheless the danger to Ormond was real. Despite Ossory's best efforts to defend his father, he could still report to Ormond that 'great whispers are against you...I hope to God the worst they can do will be to remove you from your present station'.<sup>873</sup>

The new parliament sitting in England seemed to reinvigorate English policy towards Ireland. The restructuring of England's own defence arrangements was having offshoots in Ireland, though the question of parliamentary jurisdiction added yet another element of uncertainty. A memorandum was drawn up for Arran dealing with Ireland's constitutional position, concluding that the English parliament was not necessarily binding on Ireland. This was not explicitly linked to any specific parliamentary legislation or resolutions, forthcoming or otherwise, but the composition of such a document could be taken as an indication of concern that events in England could force the hand of the Irish government, in which case it could facilitate a legal defence against such an eventuality. Equally, in stressing the legal primacy of the Irish parliament, it could facilitate Ormond's long-standing desire to see one sit, if only on the pretext that Ireland's security depended upon the finance that it could provide, but the spectre of arbitrary government was implicit within this.<sup>874</sup> Nonetheless, supplies of

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<sup>868</sup> Primate Boyle to Lady Ranelagh, 14 Apr. 1679 (*HMC Rep 6.*, *app.*, pp 735-6)

<sup>869</sup> Information of Joanna Gourney, 8 May 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 39, f. 57); information of James Gourney (Bodl., Carte MS 39, ff 51-53).

<sup>870</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 15 Apr. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 45-49).

<sup>871</sup> Longford to George Mathew, 15 Apr. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 50-51); Ossory to Ormond, 15 Apr. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 45-49).

<sup>872</sup> Ossory to Lady Ormond, 19 Apr. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 53-54).

<sup>873</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 22 Apr. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 54-55).

<sup>874</sup> Col. Edward Cooke to Ormond, 15 April 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 48-50); Memo to Arran, 17 April 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 39, ff 89-91).

munitions were being sent to Ireland, and the Irish militia was to be reorganised.<sup>875</sup> Twenty-one new companies were despatched to Cork (with the onus of accommodating them being placed upon Orrery).<sup>876</sup> Returns of Catholic inhabitants were obtained from all towns bar Limerick (an oversight for which Orrery was blamed). Ireland 'cannot be in disorder and danger but that it must proportionately affect England'; but Ireland was supposedly quite capable of its own defence if need be.<sup>877</sup> The flux of English politics seems to have prompted a review of the Irish government, in line with that of England.<sup>878</sup> Certainly Shaftesbury, Essex and once again Ranelagh were actively hostile towards senior figures in Dublin, but despite this Ormond's position was, reportedly, secure.<sup>879</sup> Yet it was soon rumoured in Ireland that his replacement by Halifax (supported by Monmouth and opposed by Essex) was imminent, with a restructuring of the council along English lines to follow.<sup>880</sup>

Naturally, others would reflect upon matters relating to Ireland. William Petty had given thought to the current state of affairs, and had drafted three papers in April-May to send to Robert Southwell, on current events, one of which explicitly dealt with the pertinent question of 'intestine rebellion' in Ireland, and how best to prevent it. Petty emphasised the disproportionate wealth and strength of the Protestant community, but the possession of that wealth compromised them: they were obliged to employ Catholics. The large numbers of Catholics were, he argued, easily led by a clerical and intellectual elite (such as lawyers), but these could easily be 'disposed of'. But he also suggested that perhaps the Catholics could be detached from their leaders, and could be converted to the established church. He went so far as to suggest that Irishwomen should be removed from the country and replaced with Englishwomen, which could only be beneficial in terms of altering the religion and culture of the Catholic Irish. But he was undoubtedly aware of reality as it stood at this juncture: he suggested that the Protestant interest had to be defended against the simmering hostility of Catholics, 'whom religion and the loss of estate have made implacable against the English'.<sup>881</sup>

<sup>875</sup> Lord Lieutenant and Council to Commissioners of Array, 18 Apr. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 52-53).

<sup>876</sup> Orrery to Ormond, 17 Apr. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 51-52).

<sup>877</sup> Ormond to Massareene, 26 Apr. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 64-65).

<sup>878</sup> Wyche to Ormond, 22 Apr. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 58-59).

<sup>879</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 26 Apr. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 70-71); same to same, 6 May 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 87).

<sup>880</sup> Conway to Sir George Rawdon, 3 May 1679 (*HMC Hastings*, ii, pp 387-8)

<sup>881</sup> 'Considerations how the Protestants or non-Papists of Ireland may disabled the Papists there both for intestine rebellion and also for assisting a French invasion...in the present year 1679', c. *CSPD 1679-80*, pp 353-7; BL Add MS 72,852, ff 170-71. This latter was sent to Southwell, and is dated 5 Aug. 1679.

Southwell was asked, if he was of a mind to distribute them, to show the treatises to those who would give them serious consideration, and who 'desire to have Ireland well saved from Popery and the French' and who had 'some power to execute what is good, for all that is practicable'.<sup>882</sup>

Orrery, however, seemed happy with things as they stood, and with Ormond's new disposition.<sup>883</sup> But he remained an obvious if unwelcome conduit for the fears of Munster Protestants, and the broader question of Protestant security in Ireland remained an issue in London, with arms importation proving especially contentious; who was importing arms for whom, and why?<sup>884</sup> Orrery remained pessimistic about the international situation, for his horizons were by no means limited to Munster. He informed the duke of Newcastle, for example, that a journey to London he had planned would be delayed by alarms over a possible French invasion and a consequent Irish rebellion, as he would be stopping along the way to inspect the coast and determine 'where the French will make their impression...the poor Protestants would take it somewhat worse should I leave the country at this nick of time'.<sup>885</sup> Despite this, English politics did shift its attention away from Ireland at this juncture; the imminent exclusion proceedings in parliament, and the outbreak of rebellion in Scotland provided the context for this. In Ireland outstanding issues remained unchanged: Ormond's own position, with Halifax, Henry Jones, Lady Ranelagh and possibly even Monmouth all emerging as new detractors, while Shaftesbury himself was appointed head of the Privy Council; security; and, of course, the unresolved question of Ranelagh's accounts.<sup>886</sup> Indeed, these were intertwined, as Ranelagh was perfectly willing to exploit suspicions of Ormond that stemmed from the viceroy's association with court; his desire to do this was facilitated by Essex's control of the treasury. But Ranelagh remained vulnerable

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<sup>882</sup> Petty to Southwell, 3 May 1679 (*Petty-Southwell Correspondence*, pp 76-8)

<sup>883</sup> Orrery to Ormond, 2 May 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 77-78).

<sup>884</sup> Rev. Christopher Vowell to Orrery, 5 May 1678 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 81-82); Coventry to Ormond, 5 May 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 82-83); Col. Edward Cooke to Ormond, 10 May 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 88-91).

<sup>885</sup> Orrery to Newcastle, 25 Apr. 1679 (*HMC Rep. 13, app. 2*, pp 154-55).

<sup>886</sup> Conway to Rawdon, 3 May 1679 (*HMC Hastings*, ii, pp 387-88); 'A.B' to Ormond, 13 May 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 95-97); Coventry to Ormond, 17 May 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 105-6); Massareene to Ormond, 13 May 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 99-100); Privy Council to Lord Lieutenant, 21 May 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 112-13); Sir Robert Howard to Ormond, 15 May 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 104); Ormond to Sir Robert Howard, 24 May 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 113); Ormond to Shaftesbury, 25 May 1679 (*HMC Leybourne-Popham*, pp 244-45).

due to the imminent conclusion of his undertaking and the examination of his accounts, and Ormond was inclined to exploit this to his advantage.<sup>887</sup>

On 6 May the lords had recommended to the Privy Council that Protestant merchants be licensed to trade weapons to Ireland, exclusively for Protestant usage.<sup>888</sup> A proclamation of 14 May declared 28 May a fast day 'to defeat popish conspiracies and implore a blessing on parliament'.<sup>889</sup> And Waterford corporation resolved to raise £260 to equip the local militia, blaming the tardiness of the government and citizens for the poor condition of the town's defences.<sup>890</sup> Oliver Plunkett, in hiding, observed that those Catholic clergy still in Ireland were being continually harassed, often at the behest of ever-increasing numbers of informers. Presbyterians were notably zealous in this regard, and the Catholic laity were too afraid to help their clergy.<sup>891</sup> It was ironic that, amid such concerns about potentially rebellious Irish Catholics, Scottish Presbyterians would provide the reality of rebellion instead.

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<sup>887</sup> Egan, 'Finance and the government of Ireland', ii, pp 99-103.

<sup>888</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 556.

<sup>889</sup> Steele, *Proclamations*, ii, p. 114.

<sup>890</sup> Pender (ed), *Council books of the Corporation of Waterford*, pp 181-2

<sup>891</sup> Plunkett to Cerri, 15 May 1679 (Hanly, *Plunkett letters*, pp 529-31).

## Chapter 8:

### May 1679-November 1680

A Catholic rebellion would not have been the only prospective rebellion in Ireland to potentially incorporate an international dimension. The outbreak of rebellion in Scotland would inevitably have ramifications in Ireland. The creation of a distinct Presbyterian identity in Ulster had been evident from the early seventeenth century onwards - Thomas Wentworth had sought to grapple with it in the 1630s - but the events of the 1640s had spurred the creation of a distinct clerical structure that, by its nature, was at odds with the established church. This was confined to the geographical area of Scottish settlement in Ulster (though Presbyterian congregations could be found in southern regions by the 1670s), and as such it played an important role in regulating society at a local level: but this intermesh of settler society and Presbyterian structures made the latter extremely resilient, and difficult to suppress.<sup>892</sup>

This religious dissidence potentially possessed a political dimension in the form of covenanting: the revival of the Scottish Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 was a recurring fear in both Ireland and Scotland throughout the Restoration. The Catholic Church and the Anglican Church of Ireland were both aware of the latent danger of Presbyterianism. Though, like Catholics in the 1660s, Ulster Presbyterians were often preoccupied with proving their political loyalty to a sceptical government, the lack of a formal synod during the Restoration era made it impossible for such efforts to be fully representative, or indeed comprehensive. Thus, Presbyterians remained suspect. Governments in Dublin took the official position that Presbyterian worship was to be suppressed, but in reality more moderate accommodations were striven for. However, Ormond was notably hostile to Presbyterians, which was perhaps unsurprising after his own experiences of the 1640s. He was willing to tolerate them to an extent - which meant no covenanting - but also to punish them severely as required. Mounting tensions in Scotland in the late 1670s had naturally attracted his concern and attention. He was more concerned about Presbyterians than Catholics, being willing to play both

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<sup>892</sup> Raymond Gillespie, 'The Presbyterian revolution in Ulster, 1660-1690' in W.J. Sheils & Diana Wood (eds) *The Churches, Ireland and the Irish* (Oxford, 1989), pp 159-70.

off one another, but prior to the Popish Plot he had been increasing security measures in Ulster via the offices of Granard.<sup>893</sup>

Unrest amongst Presbyterians in Scotland had been simmering since the onset of the Popish Plot, and on 3 May 1679 Archbishop James Sharp was assassinated outside St. Andrews by disaffected Presbyterians. Subsequently, an attack by government forces on an armed conventicle at Drumclog on 1 June resulted in their defeat, and a Covenanter rebellion broke out in western Scotland. It ended at Bothwell Brig on 22 June when the rebels were defeated by an Anglo-Scottish force under James Scott, duke of Monmouth, one of Charles's illegitimate sons, who had already been suggested as a possible Protestant alternative to York, and whose star would rise in the wake of his suppression of the rebellion.

In Irish terms, a persistent concern about unrest in Scotland was that it might spill over into Ulster, or provoke unrest amongst Scottish Presbyterians there. There could be few doubts about Ormond's willingness to deal with the Scottish rebellion and its ramifications, for his hostility to dissenters was no secret, but other insinuations against him arose. Had he favoured Catholics in Ireland unduly, and at the expense of Protestants? Ormond strongly rebutted such suggestions. After all, he had permitted Protestants to buy arms and ammunition from the government. 'To the question that was asked you whether I had given leave to all Protestants to arm themselves I know not what other answer to make then that when Papists only were ordered to be disarmed it strongly implied that such Protestants as had arms might keep them'.<sup>894</sup> Ormond was naturally more concerned with Presbyterian insurrection at this juncture, especially as 'fanatic' preachers were arriving in Ulster in the aftermath of the murder of Archbishop Sharp and the subsequent rebellion.<sup>895</sup> The Privy Council had indeed instructed Ormond that Protestant merchants were to be permitted to import weapons for use by Protestants. The militia was also to be armed, but this distribution of weapons was to be strictly regulated: £8,000 worth of weapons was to be imported from England for this purpose, and pressure was to be maintained on Catholics to ensure their disarmament.<sup>896</sup> Ironically, the latent fears about the security of Protestant Ireland that

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<sup>893</sup> Richard L. Greaves, 'That's no good religion that disturbs government': the Church of Ireland and the nonconformist challenge, 1660-88' in Alan Ford, Kenneth Milne & James McGuire (eds), *As by law established: the Church of Ireland since the Reformation* (Dublin, 1995), pp 120-35.

<sup>894</sup> Ormond to unknown, 10 May 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 146, p. 177).

<sup>895</sup> PRO PC/2/68, 53 (23 May 1679).

<sup>896</sup> PRO PC/2/68, 59 (28 May 1679).

were highlighted by the Popish Plot may well have been exacerbated by a Protestant rebellion.

The upheaval in Scotland seemed to illustrate that the internal threat of Protestant dissent within the three kingdoms was of greater import than its as yet unproven Catholic equivalent. This is not to say that the Scottish rebellion dispelled fears of Catholicism: York, in exile in Holland at this time, was reportedly unhappy that John Fitzpatrick had visited him, a fact that could potentially be used against both him and Ormond in parliament as evidence of pro-Catholic inclinations. Fitzpatrick had apparently claimed that the position of Irish Catholics was 'intolerable', and that they would be willing to rise at York's behest, or indeed if anyone landed in Ireland and supplied them with weapons.<sup>897</sup> The Catholic Church was concerned at parliament's order that Fitzpatrick be barred from within twenty miles of Dublin. The Catholic Church may not have regarded him as the prospective leader of a rebellion, but Fitzpatrick was regarded as a valuable intermediary on behalf of Catholics at court, and indeed between Protestants and the Catholic hierarchy. However, it was feared that he might become embroiled in conspiracies of various kinds at a juncture when 'persecution is spreading from England to Ireland', and he had chosen exile in Brussels for fear of imprisonment.<sup>898</sup> In August 1679 Fitzpatrick assured the Vatican that he would do all in his power to assist Catholics in Ireland, but as he was still exiled in Brussels the relevance of such an assurance was questionable.<sup>899</sup> Yet Pope Innocent XI apparently held Fitzpatrick in high regard for his efforts on behalf of Irish Catholics; his role as a bogey-man for Protestants was perhaps understandable, even though Fitzpatrick eventually converted to the Established Church.<sup>900</sup>

In Ireland, the well-worn theme of the revenue was inevitably highlighted at a time of potential military exertion. Indeed, the lack of money for military purposes had even seen the suspension of Irish pensions.<sup>901</sup> However, it was assumed that disputes among the revenue farmers (especially claims that the accounts were 'deliberately confused') would rebound to Ranelagh's detriment.<sup>902</sup> Ranelagh himself had bought an office at court, as a Gentleman of the Bedchamber, presumably for greater access to the king, and thereby greater influence at court; he was apparently losing credence in

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<sup>897</sup> Tanari to Secretariate of State, 3 June 1679 (*Nunziatura di Fiandri*, ii, p. 66).

<sup>898</sup> Tanari to Secretariate of State, 3 June 1679 (*Nunziatura di Fiandri*, ii, pp 71-2).

<sup>899</sup> Tanari to Secretariate of State, 26 Aug. 1679 (*Nunziatura di Fiandri*, ii, p. 73).

<sup>900</sup> Cibo to Tanari, 24 June 1679 (*Nunziatura di Fiandri*, viii, p. 90).

<sup>901</sup> Ormond to Sunderland, 3 June 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 120-21).

<sup>902</sup> Michael Boyle to Orrery, 31 May 1679 (*Orrery papers*, p. 210).

London.<sup>903</sup> The Privy Council had ordered Ormond to bring the inspection of Ranelagh's accounts to a conclusion, and recommended prosecuting his partners if the process was incomplete or obstructed. Ormond was to make inquiries in order to ensure that all outstanding arrears were paid, and Ranelagh had apparently agreed to this.<sup>904</sup> This emphasis on finance (and therefore on security) was inevitably more pertinent against the backdrop of rebellion in Scotland; after all, events 'such as these were the beginning of our troubles before 1641'.<sup>905</sup> The awareness of a British dimension to the crisis was obvious. Consequently, the security of Ulster was a major concern, for its geographical location and Presbyterian culture might facilitate unrest both on its own terms and as an adjunct to events in Scotland. Orrery had apparently predicted this, but despite being more evident than any supposed Catholic insurrection, events in Scotland were deemed unlikely to impede proceedings in the Popish Plot.<sup>906</sup> Both Catholic and Presbyterian insurrection could easily be encouraged by events elsewhere.<sup>907</sup> This had been a very real concern throughout the Restoration period; at this juncture it now seemed justified.

Potential unrest amongst the Scots was not the only internal security issue in Ulster. Tory activity remained a continual headache, and the rugged terrain of much of the province stretched military forces that were already inadequate to deal with them. This inadequacy was exacerbated by the slipshod condition of the militia and army throughout Ireland. In May, Conway's associate Sir George Rawdon had nearly shot a troublesome sergeant in Lisburn, while at the other end of the country Orrery had expressed his concerns at the incidence of duelling among troops at Youghal (a captain had already been killed) and the ill-discipline arising from it. He suggested that these activities be prohibited, and such indiscipline dealt with (though he was glad to acknowledge the belated arrival of munitions for the militia).<sup>908</sup> But the danger of rebellion in Scotland spilling over into Ireland continued to prey upon Ormond's mind; given his recurring scepticism about the existence of a Catholic plot, the reality of the Scottish rebellion was bound to take precedence. Such complaints as were abroad about

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<sup>903</sup> Anonymous to Boyle, 5 June 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 121-23); Robert Howard to Ormond, 5 June 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 123).

<sup>904</sup> PRO PC2/68, 110 (7 June 1679).

<sup>905</sup> Boyle to Ormond, 14 June 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 131).

<sup>906</sup> Michael Boyle to Orrery, 14 June 1679 (*Orrery papers*, p. 211).

<sup>907</sup> Ormond to unknown, 17 June 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 146, p. 188).

<sup>908</sup> Rawdon to Conway, 17 May 1679 (PRO SP 63/339/14); same to same, 31 May 1679 (PRO SP 63/339/18); Ossory to Ormond, 10 June 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 127-8); Orrery to Ormond, 20 June 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 138-40).



troops from Ireland being deployed to deal with the Scottish rebellion were deemed to stem 'from such as would not have the rebellion in Scotland suppressed too soon'.<sup>909</sup> Two foot regiments under Sir William King, and a further six under Granard, were to be put into readiness and deployed in Ulster, with the explicit possibility that they would be sent over to Scotland if required.<sup>910</sup> Ormond was apparently buying tents, to end the scattered quartering of the army, though Michael Boyle was not enthusiastic about Irish forces being diverted to Scotland.<sup>911</sup> Rumours persisted that Presbyterians in Ulster were emboldened by events in Scotland, and 4,000-strong assemblies were reported in County Londonderry, though more moderate Presbyterians were apparently hopeful of succour from the English parliament.<sup>912</sup> Scots Presbyterians in Ulster were by no means a monolith; at least some Presbyterian ministers were prepared to pledge their loyalty to the government,<sup>913</sup> but concerns about the implications of such unrest seemed to resonate across the country. In Dublin, the Lord Mayor was to be granted an allowance, having 'been at great charge in order to the raising the militia for the safety of the city in this time of danger'.<sup>914</sup> There were inevitable mutterings of concern from Kinsale about the Catholic natives, but the actuality of Presbyterian unrest was more immediately problematic. A proclamation on 30 June ordered the arrest of all arrivals from Scotland until their credentials could be established; 'no-one is to harbour them'.<sup>915</sup>

Ormond remained concerned about the progress of the troop deployments in Ulster, and expected the arrival of a frigate to bolster security in the northern channel between Ulster and Scotland. The examination of a Scottish apothecary, one William Kelso, as taken by Rawdon in Lisburn, illustrated this maritime danger clearly. Kelso had been recruited to the covenanting forces due to his medical expertise, but on perceiving their intention to engage royal forces had decided to abscond to London with his family. Upon hearing of the defeat of the rebels he had sought to get there via Dublin; hence his arrival in Ulster. The related account of a Scottish sea captain told of

<sup>909</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 17 June 1679 (V & A, F.47.A.40, f. 53).

<sup>910</sup> 18 June 1679, BL Add MS 28,930, f. 139.

<sup>911</sup> Michael Boyle to Orrery, 24 June 1679 (*Orrery papers*, p. 212).

<sup>912</sup> 'Letter to a friend', 25 June 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 45, ff 431-4).

<sup>913</sup> Petition to Ormond, 25 June 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 45, f. 529).

<sup>914</sup> c.24 June 1679 (*Calendar of ancient records of Dublin*, v, p. 177).

<sup>915</sup> Sir Philip Percival to Southwell, 27 June 1679 (*HMC Egmont*, ii, p. 82); Steele, *Proclamations*, ii, p. 115.

numerous vessels carrying fugitives to ports such as Carrickfergus.<sup>916</sup> Correspondence between Presbyterians across the northern channel, and those figures that were assisting or facilitating this were to be sought; a particular suggestion was to find an unspecified figure posing as Kelso's servant, to dispel any suspicions of 'indulgence to that party'. To such ends, troops remained at the ready, as the Scottish rebellion remained a preoccupation.<sup>917</sup>

However, military force to suppress unrest cost money, and the disastrous condition of the revenue ensured 'the danger of this Kingdom to itself, and in consequence to the rest of his dominions to his Majesty'. While the eventual successes against the Scottish rebels ostensibly justified measures to prevent 'insurrection or invasion', the lack of available money to do so adequately remained a running sore, despite the rebellion having highlighted the problem. An Irish parliament was the obvious means of raising funds, and Ormond bemoaned the lack of progress on the issue. True, English politics was naturally preoccupied, but 'there have been some intervals that to me at this distance seemed long enough for the work'.<sup>918</sup> The aftermath of Monmouth's victory in June offered the possibility that the king might devote some time to security in general, and that of Ireland in particular, 'which I think needs only authority and direction to provide for its own security'.<sup>919</sup> Ormond was well aware of the distinction between militant and moderate Presbyterians, a distinction that could undermine any attempts at a solution to the crisis via a general indulgence.<sup>920</sup> Presumably, more substantial measures would be required. Yet this is not to say that Irish events were far from the minds of all. Petty had inquired in early June about the treatises he had sent to Southwell, for while 'the apprehensions of men are changed since they were composed. The world was then full of fury, but the temper of these papers I conceive to be such as may serve in all times'.<sup>921</sup>

Pressure on Ormond's personal position was evident once more, though it was the earl of Halifax now, rather than Essex, who apparently sought his post.<sup>922</sup> Ormond's suspicions about Orrery slandering him were correct with regards to the latter: Orrery had told Essex that Ormond 'has not engaged to undertake for the safety of this

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<sup>916</sup> R.M. Young, 'News from Ireland: being the examination and confession of William Kelso, c.1679', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, ser. 2, vol. 2 (July 1896), pp 274-9.

<sup>917</sup> Ormond to Rawdon, 26 June 1679 (*Rawdon Papers*, pp 262-3).

<sup>918</sup> Ormond to Essex, 1 July 1679 (NLI MS 802, f. 11).

<sup>919</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 2 July 1679 (V & A, F.47.A.40, f 55).

<sup>920</sup> Ormond to unknown, 5 July 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 45, ff 531-2).

<sup>921</sup> Petty to Southwell, 10 June 1679 (*Petty Southwell Correspondence*, pp 78-9).

<sup>922</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 8 July, 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 152).

kingdom'.<sup>923</sup> He followed this up by providing Essex with information he had obtained about plans for a Catholic rebellion and a French invasion.<sup>924</sup> After the interlude provided by the Scottish rebellion this was a return to more traditional preoccupations, but there were some grounds for optimism on Ormond's part as some previously thorny issues that could have been used against him seemed to reach resolution. Richard Talbot, for example, was given permission to travel to France to receive medical attention for a badly swollen testicle (which, according to the later account of the acting constable of Dublin Castle, 'appeared to me to be an extraordinary swelling in one of his stones, near as big as a gooses egg, much discoloured, and as he said very hard and sore'), thereby permitting a convenient exile in France while he awaited permission to return that could easily be withheld. The convenient removal of Talbot from the political scene coincided with what appeared to be Ranelagh's reluctant acquiescence in the production of his accounts.<sup>925</sup>

Despite such ostensibly positive signs, Coventry still maintained that Ormond should stay in Ireland, rather than decamp to England. 'Your presence here would but precipitate the designs of your enemies', and should anything untoward happen in Ireland in his absence, it 'would not escape odd reflection according to the humour of the present conjuncture'. Ormond should remain *in situ*, and bide his time. It was not enough merely to claim that he was in no immediate danger, for given events in parliament, the position of the king himself was not necessarily secure either. While Ormond might be inclined to resign, Charles was not inclined to accept it; he may have been inclined to keep a traditionally reliable servant in place at a potentially uncertain time. Moreover, such danger as the viceroy was in stemmed from within the court; in parliament (when it had sat), his support 'was so considerable that it was that which secured you'.<sup>926</sup> And at the trials of the five Jesuits in June, and of Sir George Wakeman in July, Titus Oates himself had reiterated that the murder of Ormond was to be an integral part of the plot: Ormond was cast as a potential victim, rather than an actual accomplice, of the Catholics.<sup>927</sup> While the grievances that had preyed on his mind since the onset of the plot were no different at this point, Ormond seemed more content in his charge. The suppression of the Scottish rebellion had alleviated some of

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<sup>923</sup> Orrery to Essex, 24 June 1679 (BL Stowe MS 212, f. 356).

<sup>924</sup> Orrery to Essex, 7 July 1679 (BL Stowe MS 212, ff 361, 363-8).

<sup>925</sup> 'Testimony of Mr. Gurner', 10 Nov. 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 243, f. 343); Privy Council to Ormond, 11 July 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS f. 738; *CSPD 1679-80*, pp 196-97).

<sup>926</sup> Coventry to Ormond, 17 May 1679 (BL Add MS 25, 125, ff 65-8).

<sup>927</sup> *State trials*, viii, cols. 327-8, 631.

his fears about the current condition of Ulster, though the potential for unrest remained, and barring either civil war or invasion there was still nothing to fear from Catholics.<sup>928</sup> Indeed, such attitudes seem to have been more widely expressed, as the crisis seemed to progress no further. The Protestant business and mercantile communities of Galway petitioned at this time for the return of those Catholics who had previously been expelled from the city. Trade and the local economy had suffered, and they offered to take responsibility for their loyalty: hardly an indication of a belief in any imminent rebellion. While the Irish council overwhelmingly agreed, the king refused to concede this, as the expulsion order had originally been prompted by an address of the English House of Lords; to disregard this would be impolitic at best.<sup>929</sup> Instead, it was ordered that no freeman (barring certain categories listed in the city charter) be admitted to office in Galway without taking the oaths.<sup>930</sup>

Given the religious composition of its hinterland, dominated by the interest of the Catholic earls of Clanricard, it was no surprise that Galway had a long tradition of Catholic involvement in its civic politics, though the early seventeenth century had seen the widespread imposition of the oath of supremacy along with prosecutions for recusancy. Catholics had been repressed under the Commonwealth, but even after the Restoration its reputation as a Confederate stronghold weighed against the full reversal of this situation: a fact that starkly contradicted the relevant clause of the declaration of Breda. This situation changed under the governments of Berkeley and Essex, with the latter exercising his discretion to dispense with the oaths as required. Under the charter granted to the city on 14 August 1677 Catholics were barred from corporate office, but could become freemen (albeit without voting rights), and could reside and trade within the town. Yet despite the qualified agreement to readmit Catholics in July 1679, this process was stopped in August, though it was not reversed.<sup>931</sup> On the other hand, in the autumn of 1679 the mayor of Limerick ordered that officers and soldiers be quartered within the city walls. The numbers of the garrison had been increased, and those soldiers quartered outside the city walls were to be quartered within them, in inns, alehouses, and if required, the homes of recusants and Catholics. The problems facing Limerick's defences were symptomatic of the problems facing Ireland's defences in

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<sup>928</sup> Ormond to Burlington, 15 July 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 155).

<sup>929</sup> Ormond to Coventry, 17 July 1679 (Prendergast Papers, xi, p 452-54); Coventry to Ormond, 25 July 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 163).

<sup>930</sup> 17 July 1679 (Blake, 'Galway Corporation Book B', p. 94)

<sup>931</sup> This discussion is based on the introduction to Blake 'Galway Corporation Book B', pp 65-90.

general: they were dilapidated to the point of being worthless, and the corporation was faced with difficulties in paying for their refurbishment.<sup>932</sup>

Yet there does not seem to have been any discernable threat. The reality was that fears about the condition of Ireland were dictated by the exigencies of English politics, rather than Irish realities. While the English parliament was prorogued on 12 July, thus removing parliamentary pressure for at least some time, hints would continue to emerge in the burgeoning Whig press of sinister activities in Ireland.<sup>933</sup> The flux of English politics was never far away, but consequently its currents could potentially be manipulated to advantage. Longford, for example, was convinced at this juncture that Ranelagh, given his increasingly precarious position, could be readily crushed: 'if your Grace lets him slip out of your hands...he will be forever established in the king's opinion and favour'. And for Ormond, Ranelagh's resurgence could prove disastrous.<sup>934</sup> However, the fact that the accounts of the undertaking were, as yet, undisclosed ensured that Charles would order Ormond to prosecute Ranelagh.<sup>935</sup> This was subsequently confirmed, as on 18 June Ranelagh had been ordered to return to Ireland (or at least send agents there) 'to determine and conclude all matters relating to the accounts of their undertaking' within 14 days, a deadline that had seemingly expired without any progress being made.<sup>936</sup> Yet, paradoxically, the possibility of his prosecution would seemingly be obstructed by the reluctance of the undertakers to produce the accounts.<sup>937</sup>

It was perhaps inevitable, in such circumstances, that rumours against Ormond began afresh, but on a surprising front. A letter, allegedly written at the time of the Scottish rebellion, supposedly proved that Ormond was 'disaffected' to Protestants, deeming them the greater danger (which was indeed his opinion with regards to Presbyterians); similar allegations had been made just prior to the Scottish rebellion. Intended as it was to influence parliament at a time when the Irish government still sought to repatriate Scottish fugitives back to Scotland, this letter could prove particularly dangerous, though the claim was repudiated; understandably, given

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<sup>932</sup> BL Add MS 19,859, f. 194.

<sup>933</sup> *Domestic Intelligence*, 14 July 1679.

<sup>934</sup> Longford to Arran, 22 July 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 159-60).

<sup>935</sup> PRO PC2/68, 182 (14 July 1679).

<sup>936</sup> PRO PC2/68, 189 (30 July 1679).

<sup>937</sup> Ormond to unknown, 2 Aug. 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 146, pp 205-7).

Ormond's distaste for dissenters.<sup>938</sup> But despite this he was continually reassured of the king's good favour, of Charles's displeasure at the persistent rumours of his dismissal and of his stubborn refusal to replace him.<sup>939</sup> Such cumulative reports could only have been reassuring; he claimed to Arran that Longford, for all his good intentions, was too extreme in his defence.<sup>940</sup> Indications of pressure being exerted upon Ranelagh also seemed to bode well; a dispute amongst the revenue farmers suggested that the details of the accounts would finally be made public, while there were overt hints abroad of Ranelagh's corruption, which if substantiated, would prove disastrous for him and his partners.<sup>941</sup>

On the other hand, the lack of an Irish parliament remained problematic. Ormond's desire to call a parliament in Ireland had been his priority since his appointment, but 'then the dangerous times we live in were reasonably to be expected, though there was then no discovery of the plot that hath so employed his Majesty'.<sup>942</sup> But despite this, there had as yet been no further discoveries of a plot, or indeed of evidence to justify the belief in a plot. By the end of September the corporation of Galway were once again petitioning Ormond to bring the town's market back within the city walls (markets had been banned within the walls of cities and towns due to the plot), and that the homes of expelled Catholics were lapsing into disrepair; they requested that certain Catholics be permitted back, under appropriate sureties.<sup>943</sup>

The pattern established over the previous year since the plot allegations first emerged remained largely unchanged. Ormond remained under pressure and vulnerable, and now the possibility of his impeachment by the English parliament had also arisen.<sup>944</sup> Ranelagh still had not come to an accounting and was fighting a rearguard action against the possibility of having to provide one.<sup>945</sup> Non-conformists in Ulster still remained a likely source of unrest.<sup>946</sup> Yet while certainly such

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<sup>938</sup> Longford to Ormond, 5 Aug. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 167-69); Coventry to Ormond, 30 Aug. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 196); PRO PC2/68, 182 (24 July 1679).

<sup>939</sup> Nicholas Armourer to Arran, 8 Aug. 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 39, ff 64-65); Arlington to Ormond, 8 Aug. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 175); Coventry to Ormond, 9 Aug. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 177-78).

<sup>940</sup> Ormond to Arran, 12 Aug. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 178).

<sup>941</sup> Boyle to Ormond, 12 Aug. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 178-81); Rawdon to Conway, 13 Aug. 1679 (*CSPD 1679-80*, pp 218-19).

<sup>942</sup> Ormond to unknown, 26 Aug. 1679 (NLI MS 802 ff 3-4).

<sup>943</sup> 29 September 1679 (Blake, 'Galway Corporation Book B', pp 96-9)

<sup>944</sup> Unknown to Arran, 24 Sept. 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 39, f. 68); Ossory to Ormond, 23 Sept. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 212-13).

<sup>945</sup> Longford to Ormond, 2 Sept. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 196-97).

<sup>946</sup> Coventry to Ormond, 18 Sept. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 208-10).

considerations remained relevant, emerging as they had against the backdrop of the Popish Plot, no further proof of the existence of a Catholic plot had actually emerged. But while there was no shortage of conjecture and paranoia in Ireland that could be readily whipped up to serve a variety of purposes, there remained a dearth of actual testimony and evidence. True, deponents in England had amplified some of Oates' original claims by making reference in December and January to a plot involving Ireland. The original allegations about a plot to assassinate both Ormond and the king had claimed that while the Jesuits were behind this, the actual killers were to have been Irish; thus, in keeping an awareness of this incident alive, an awareness of Irish involvement in the plot allegations in England was unlikely to have been dissipated. Such innuendoes were evident in occasional scattered reports in the Whig press in London. One of these claimed that an unnamed 'considerable person' in Ireland was privy to the plot, and had absconded to France after posting £30,000 bail. But no further details were provided.<sup>947</sup> Ormond at this time did not unduly concern himself with issues in England, such as these allegations, that did not directly impinge on him or his government. However, he continued to defend his conduct in London, especially in the light of continued allegations about John Fitzpatrick.<sup>948</sup> Ormond had previously written to Coventry about this, but Coventry had seen no value in printing this letter as a defence, as Ormond had suggested. These rumours were, admittedly, intended to procure favour in London, but they sought to do so by provoking disaffection in Ireland.<sup>949</sup> It was inevitable that news of such insinuations would spread. Rawdon, writing to Conway from Lisburn, noted that 'Lord Ranelagh is long looked for in Dublin': a hint that Ranelagh may indeed have been the source of some such rumours. Rawdon also confirmed that there was no indication of an Irish parliament being called, and certainly not while an English parliament was in session. Yet for Rawdon these events remained distant to the point of abstraction. Far removed from the centre of power, the Tories of Ulster were of more immediate relevance to him, especially Redmond O'Hanlon, who was on the run in Leitrim: his activities took on a new significance after his followers killed Henry St John of Tandragee on 9 September.<sup>950</sup>

The activities of Tories would in time assume considerable relevance to the allegations about an Irish plot. But as yet, there had been no Irish equivalents to Oates's

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<sup>947</sup> *Domestic Intelligence*, 23 Sept 1679.

<sup>948</sup> PRO PC2/68, 206 (19 Sept. 1679).

<sup>949</sup> Coventry to Ormond, 9 Sept. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 202).

<sup>950</sup> Rawdon to Conway, 14 Sept. 1679 (*CSPD 1679-80*, pp 241-2; PRO SP 63/339/35).

allegations of the existence of a Popish Plot from individuals familiar with Ireland who could provide first-hand testimony of what they had supposedly witnessed and been privy to. However, this state of affairs changed markedly, as Irish witnesses began to emerge with what seemed to be compelling testimony of their own involvement in precisely what had been feared. In September 1679 rumours and assumptions about the existence of an Irish Catholic plot gave way to what seemed to be concrete evidence, in the form of two sets of testimony. Precisely when David Fitzgerald came to official notice is uncertain, but by early September 1679 Ormond and the Irish administration knew of him. He was apparently imprisoned in Limerick at this time, and Ormond was prepared to offer him a pardon in exchange for information on the plot he supposedly knew of.<sup>951</sup> However, he was of considerable interest to other figures such as Orrery.<sup>952</sup> Within days Ormond had a copy of Fitzgerald's information, though it was neither sworn to nor corroborated.<sup>953</sup> Ossory soon provided further details.

I received a letter from Sir Robert Southwell giving an account of my Lord of Orrery's having a discovery made him of a plot that had been carrying on these two or three years. The informer is one David Fitzgerald, who affirms he told it to Sir Robert Southwell and another justice of the peace, who having omitted to make it known to him or the Lord Lieutenant, he intended to have them accused of misprision of treason. This story was writ from Limerick the 16<sup>th</sup> of September, and your letter being on the 27<sup>th</sup> I find [neither] Mr Secretary nor any else has any notice of it from you, by which I guess this is an old trick of his lordships. I told it to the King, who, calling him rogue and rascal, seems much incensed.<sup>954</sup>

Fitzgerald's allegation was not the only one of its kind. On 28 September 1679 Eustace Comyn, of Painstown, Meath claimed that some five years previously, in Carrick-on-Suir, he had heard John Brennan, the Catholic bishop of Cashel, bemoan the fact that 'if he had more money than he had, he had not enough of it to help those of his own religion'. He had also spoken of the impending arrival of 'those of his own religion, Frenchmen, that would come in to this kingdom and England to take the kingdom for themselves'. York 'was the right king, and not he that has many bastards'. The malice and intent of the Papists was revealed in the fact that Brennan allegedly gave £200 to Sir William Davis to assassinate Comyn, who apparently had more to tell, though the

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<sup>951</sup> Ormond to Bishop of Limerick, 7 Sept. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 199-200).

<sup>952</sup> Orrery to Michael Boyle, 16 Sept. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 206-7).

<sup>953</sup> Ormond to Michael Boyle, 21 Sept. 1679 (*HMC Ormond*, ns, v, p. 212).

<sup>954</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 10 Oct. 1679 (*HMC Ormond*, ns, v, p. 220).



examining justice of the peace had been sceptical of the claims.<sup>955</sup> In time, these allegations would assume a more immediate relevance within the burgeoning Whig campaign to exclude a Catholic heir (such as York) from the succession to the crown.

This can be contrasted with more promising news, relating to the most obvious group of prospectively troublesome subjects in Ireland, in the form of a declaration of loyalty to the government by Presbyterian preachers in Ulster. Aware that, once again, aspersions of disloyalty had been cast upon them, they had addressed themselves to Granard on 17 September with assurances of their loyalty, and their intention to discourage sedition amongst their flock, at least insofar as it did not contradict their principles. The difficulty of getting a unanimous declaration had prompted the swift provision of such an assurance, but should a unanimous declaration be required, those ministers who had subscribed would undertake to get one<sup>956</sup> Having been highlighted by the recent rebellion in Scotland, security in Ulster would always be more concerned with Presbyterians than Papists.<sup>957</sup> Yet the straitened finances of the Irish government were evident when, three weeks later, soldiers quartered in Lisburn were granted limited credit 'in the intervals of receiving their pay'.<sup>958</sup> In this regard, little seems to have changed, even if the storm had passed.

York had by now left England for Scotland. It was reported in London that 'letters from Ireland give an account of a dangerous and mischievous design, which has been largely discovered there, contrived by the Popish faction, for the destruction of the Protestants'; weapons had supposedly been found, and at least one 'considerable person' thus implicated had fled.<sup>959</sup> It remains unclear whether this referred to the same allegations, but in any event, the arrest of those named by David Fitzgerald – Brittas, John Fitzgerald, and Pierce Lacy - was ordered.<sup>960</sup> Fitzgerald had first come to official attention through Orrery, but such difficulties as Orrery could present might not last, for it was generally accepted that his health was in terminal decline; whether he had anything to do with a report at this time alleging that a number of Jesuits had landed in Cork from Spain is another matter entirely.<sup>961</sup> Ossory had already suggested that Orrery's brother Burlington be earmarked for some of his commands, and there was

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<sup>955</sup> 'The examination of Eustace Comyn', 28 Sept. 1679 (*CSPD 1679-80*, p. 254; PRO SP 63/339/38).

<sup>956</sup> Granard to Conway, 30 Sept. 1679 (*CSPD 1679-80*, pp 254-5; PRO SP 63/339/39).

<sup>957</sup> Capt. Henry Ball to Conway, 2 Oct. 1679 (*CSPD 1679-80*, p. 256).

<sup>958</sup> Ormond to chief magistrate of Lisburn, 25 Oct 1679 (*Rawdon Papers*, p. 264).

<sup>959</sup> *Domestic Intelligence*, 3 Oct 1679.

<sup>960</sup> Order for arrest, 17 Oct. 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 38, f 522); Ormond to Ossory, 18 Oct. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, 223-4).

<sup>961</sup> *Domestic Intelligence*, 14 Oct 1679.

supposedly a consensus amongst Ormond's allies on this count. Burlington was loyal to the king, but more pertinently was not deemed hostile to Ormond. The perceived magnanimity of such a gesture could only reflect well on the beleaguered viceroy.<sup>962</sup>

Preparations for an Irish parliament began once again at this juncture, and the contentious bill of settlement was to be considered again.<sup>963</sup> In late September York himself had indicated his enthusiasm to see an Irish parliament in session, and supported Ormond's desire to call one before Christmas. But while he viewed the parliament as inevitable, York was also of the view that only the elderly Ormond could control it, and the viceroy's age made speed in doing so an imperative. He also advocated, in an aside that suggested his own awareness of the political difficulties he faced, that there should be a 'purge' of the disaffected from both the Irish council and the army, a move that once completed, should be speedily replicated in England.<sup>964</sup> However, active investigation of the plot allegations as now formulated was also intruding on the Irish government's business. Ormond ordered Sir Hans Hamilton to find and apprehend Catholic bishops, specifically Oliver Plunkett and Patrick Tyrrell; it would be 'an extraordinary service to the King' but also 'of great advantage to me'. He was willing to facilitate such rewards as were deemed necessary to achieve this, for 'the thing is of more than ordinary importance, and therefore let me once more recommend it to your best industry'.<sup>965</sup> In Plunkett's case there was an irony, for in June 1679 he had written to his superiors of his fears of arrest, but they had seemed reluctant to finance a prudent exile on the continent for him, and to set a precedent whereby the primate was permitted to leave the diocese.<sup>966</sup> The order to arrest him came after information implicating the two prelates had been provided by Coventry; Ormond acted swiftly, with Hamilton deemed the right man for the job. Given the seriousness of the issue, Ormond also ordered the arrest of the remaining Catholic prelates in Ireland, as soon as their whereabouts could be ascertained.<sup>967</sup> Hamilton got off to a brisk start (at least in his reports to the viceroy). Having been previously preoccupied with Tories, he assured Ormond of a diligent search. He was on Plunkett's trail, having received information from one of his former priests (whom he intended to examine) that

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<sup>962</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 18 Oct. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 224-5).

<sup>963</sup> Coventry to Ormond, 28 Oct. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 231).

<sup>964</sup> York to Hyde, 25 Sept. 1679 (BL Add MS 15,892, ff 83-4).

<sup>965</sup> Ormond to Hamilton, 28 Oct. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 231).

<sup>966</sup> Tanari to Secretariate of State, 10 June 1679, 1 July 1679 (*Nunziatura di Fiandri*, ii, p 72).

<sup>967</sup> Ormond to Coventry, 30 Oct. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 231-2).

Plunkett, now disguised, was near Dublin. The hunt for Tyrrell had also begun.<sup>968</sup> The search for Plunkett and other Catholic bishops was not the only matter relating to ostensible plots in Ireland outstanding at this time. There were also the allegations made against Tyrone by Hubert Boark, and a number of informations about unspecified arms shipments to Waterford and Dungarvan made by 'some masters of ships', weapons intended to arm Catholics as a prelude to a French invasion. The various persons accused had been secured (apart from Tyrone himself), but those who had accused them seemed elusive: 'we can make little progress in the discovering [of] David Fitzgerald the man of best sense and quality of them being or pretending to be sick, our endeavour is and will be so as to piece all these informations [together] that what may be wanting direct proof may be satisfied by circumstantial probabilities and brought into one [formed] design'.<sup>969</sup>

The timing of these investigations was problematic. Ormond remained quite aware that such new discoveries of a plot could cause the bills for the prospective Irish parliament to be set aside, as would indeed happen the following March.<sup>970</sup> Writing to Southwell, Ormond professed that despite it being 'as fruitful a year as this has been of plots and discoveries', the discoveries 'endeavoured to be made here' about the raising of a rebellion were being taken very seriously by the Irish government. The examination of David Fitzgerald was being undertaken at his lodgings, and was seen as an imperative, lest he succumb fatally to illness. The experienced Henry Jones was given the task of recording the details that Fitzgerald was apparently recalling at an increasing rate. Fitzgerald's narrative was awaited, but it seemed that, as yet, he offered no concrete evidence of any links between Catholics (and by implication, Catholic plots) in England and Ireland. However, Ormond remained aware that the narrative, when it did arrive, 'may be of use to fortify evidence there', and he now began to question the wisdom of calling any Irish parliament in these circumstances.<sup>971</sup> Ormond had provided such information as there was on David Fitzgerald to Southwell, but he had been unable to examine him personally. However, before any further information could be gathered, corroborated, and sent to London, Fitzgerald's information was apparently printed in London in late 1679, an event for which Orrery was blamed. Presumably the king's erstwhile assassins had not been found either, as on 12

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<sup>968</sup> Hamilton to Ormond, 1 Nov. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 233).

<sup>969</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 8 Nov. 1679 (V & A, F.47.A.40, ff 65-6).

<sup>970</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 9 Nov. 1679 (V & A, F.47.A.40, f. 67).

<sup>971</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 11 Nov. 1679 (V & A, F.47.A.40, f. 69).

November a warrant was issued for the arrest of Patrick Lavallyan and one Denis O’Kearney.<sup>972</sup> Issued by Sunderland, the warrant was to be implemented by Ormond, who was to send both suspects to England when captured.<sup>973</sup> Ormond was more optimistic about future realignments at court, which went some way towards alleviating the difficulties presented by the disorders caused by Scottish soldiers in Waterford, which had gotten out of hand with the murder of the high constable of the town. The gravity of this situation was officially denied, though the necessity for punishment was privately accepted.<sup>974</sup> By December such optimism proved ill founded; some soldiers were supposedly threatening ‘that for every one of the prisoners accused to have murdered Browne, the high sheriff of the town, that shall suffer for the same, they will have the lives of a hundred of the citizens’. The officers were supposedly backing the troops, a state of affairs that was expressly stated to be unacceptable; Ormond insisted that this be dealt with strenuously.<sup>975</sup>

Such inefficiency and indiscipline amongst the forces in Ireland was bound to prompt reflection on what could be seen to be the dereliction of their duties; in London, complaints were again being made about the perceived delay in forcing the handover of Catholic weapons, with unflattering comparisons being made to the speed at which Blood’s Plot had been dealt with in 1663 (which was the backdrop to the imminent expectation in London of further information about David Fitzgerald and his activities).<sup>976</sup> However, it appeared to Ormond that Shaftesbury remained opposed to the sitting of an Irish parliament, ‘at least while I am the governor’. Ormond was concerned that ‘the ill humour now stirring in England will be transferred hither’.<sup>977</sup> Oliver Plunkett, in hiding, was of the opinion that the persecution in Ireland was easing, but was fearful of its renewal, especially if Catholics began to move around more obviously. It seemed, to him, a false sense of security.<sup>978</sup>

An Irish parliament was, at this time, still seen as a viable option. However, Charles instructed Ormond to prepare legislation to bar Catholics from both houses, and

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<sup>972</sup> Unknown to Capt. Thomas Fitzgerald, 12 Nov. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 236)

<sup>973</sup> Sunderland to Ormond, 15 Nov. 1679 (*CSPD 1679-80*, p. 283)

<sup>974</sup> John Napper to Farmers of the Customs, 19 Nov. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 240); Capt. John Lockhart to Ormond, 22 Nov. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 240-1); Ormond to Southwell, 26 Nov. 1679 (BL Add MS 21,484, ff 54-5).

<sup>975</sup> Ormond to Mayor of Waterford, 25 Nov. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 242-3); Ormond to Sir Stephen Fox, 26 Nov. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 243); Ormond to Major Halkett, 2 Dec. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 246-7).

<sup>976</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 29 Nov. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 243-4)

<sup>977</sup> Ormond to unknown, 30 Nov. 1679 (NLI MS 802, f.6r).

<sup>978</sup> Plunkett to Tanari, 30 Nov. 1679 (Hanly, *Plunkett letters*, pp 533-8).

from holding office. The tests were to be applied as in England, and any measures necessary for 'suppressing Popery' were to be implemented; proclamations were to be issued offering, crucially, pardons to anyone who could provide information.<sup>979</sup> However, this became a moot point, as the bill for confirmation of Irish estates was opposed in the Committee for Irish Affairs in London, thus delaying the proceedings once again. A report on this was to be drawn up for the Privy Council, though Coventry considered it prudent to defer the production of the bill itself, depending on the 'inclination' of the parliament; in other words, the final draft might be delayed until the Irish parliament had actually convened.<sup>980</sup>

Such manoeuvres at this juncture naturally attracted Ranelagh's attention. The desire to call a parliament was driven by financial imperatives. Ormond had been unable to obtain any English subvention in 1679: hence the necessity for a parliament, and thus the necessity to inspect Ranelagh's accounts. These had been transmitted to Dublin in July, and Ranelagh himself followed in September, but the removal of Essex from the treasury on 17 November removed a powerful enemy. Ranelagh's continued survival would be guaranteed by continued royal support.<sup>981</sup> He remained wary of Ormond and his allies (hinting that they were, in part, motivated by malice) while restating his persistent confidence that he could sort out his accounts. But his opposition to any imminent Irish parliament may have belied this outward confidence; his argument that it should be postponed until the following winter, as it could prove unhelpful to the king (due to the alleged bad will towards Ormond and his government which might be expressed in it), seemed disingenuous in the circumstances.<sup>982</sup> It had been the consistent contention of Ormond and his administration that any prospective disgruntlement that might be expressed in parliament would stem from the question of finance, and by extension, from the machinations and activities of Ranelagh's undertaking.

On 6 December 1679 (the same day that Oliver Plunkett was arrested near Dublin) Anglesey noted in his diary how the Committee for Irish Affairs 'cast out unanimously the Irish pretended bill of confirmation of estates, but really destruction to the English'; a blunt statement of at least one opinion of it.<sup>983</sup> Paradoxically the bill that

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<sup>979</sup> Charles II to Ormond, 1 Dec. 1679 (Bodl., Carte MS 39, f. 81).

<sup>980</sup> Coventry to Ormond, 7 Dec. 1679 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 249).

<sup>981</sup> Egan, 'Finance and the government of Ireland', ii, pp 104-5, 107-9.

<sup>982</sup> Ranelagh to Conway, 5 Dec. 1679 (*CSPD 1679-80*, pp 299-300; PRO SP 63/339/50).

<sup>983</sup> Anglesey Diary, 6 Dec. 1679 (BL Add MS 18,730, f. 63).

was intended to facilitate Ireland's security could be perceived as having precisely the opposite intention and effect. The tension between the desire to investigate the Popish Plot and the more immediate institutional concerns of the Irish administration remained unresolved. 'The discovery of plots thickens upon us', wrote Ormond, as more Irish witnesses began to appear, and 'a large committee of the council [here] have little else to do then to examine the accusations and the accused and confront them'.<sup>984</sup> Fears of Catholics were reflected in ongoing concerns about the plot. A proclamation issued in Dublin on 10 December demanded that any persons with information about a plot were to report it to the Irish Council, the secretary of state or a judge by 29 February.<sup>985</sup> But such assiduousness remained unmatched by the resources available to the government, which seemed unlikely to be increased in the near future. Problems arose once again with the proposed parliament: no more bills could be transmitted until those pending had been deliberated upon, unless they were scrapped and drafted afresh. Arguably, this was a better option in the circumstances, but matters were complicated by the King's order that bills be drafted for the exclusion of Catholics from both houses of an Irish parliament, and for the more general 'suppression of Popery'.<sup>986</sup> Ranelagh noted the debate that followed this decision, which also encompassed the question of barring Catholics from employment in either civil or military capacities. He took the view that this could be done legally anyway, which would provide a natural impediment to the Catholic interest: the imprisonment of Tyrone suggested that such measures were in step with the times.<sup>987</sup> Essex apparently remained opposed to the bills of confirmation and settlement, based supposedly on his ambition to succeed Ormond as viceroy, but he was deemed 'partial to the Irish and consequently prejudicial to the Protestant interest'; a surprising assessment in light of his reputation as a stalwart of that same Protestant interest, but not necessarily in the light of his conduct as viceroy in the 1670s. He remained uncertain of his current standing at court.<sup>988</sup> Some respite may have lain in the assurance of Henry Jones that it was not possible, as yet, to compile a report on the testimony of David Fitzgerald; as yet, nothing concrete had emerged, and no material evidence had emerged to corroborate the allegations. Certainly, nothing had emerged that might link Tyrone to Fitzgerald's claims. But Tyrone had already been implicated

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<sup>984</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 1 Dec. 1679 (V & A, F.47.A.40, f 75).

<sup>985</sup> Steele, *Proclamations*, ii, p. 115.

<sup>986</sup> Ormond to unknown, 10 Dec. 1679 (NLI MS 802, f. 7).

<sup>987</sup> Ranelagh to Conway, 13 Dec. 1679 (CSPD 1679-80, p. 311; PRO SP 63/339/55).

<sup>988</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 13 Dec. 1679 (HMC Ormonde, ns, v, p. 253).

by figures such as Hubert Boark in a similar Catholic plot. Thus, suggestions of a convergence between the allegations of the various Irish witnesses would be inevitably suggestive of a much larger and more dangerous plot. But this remained a chimera. The disorders in Waterford were a far more tangible problem.<sup>989</sup> By now, these had been reported in London; the incident that had resulted in the death of the constable arose from his urinating against the door of a tavern where a number of officers were quartered. If, as was assumed, there was a plot, here was proof that the resources with which to deal with it were in a poor condition indeed. It was also noted that Irish Protestants were supposedly aware that the ostensible plot was of long duration.<sup>990</sup> Indeed, in December 1679 a congregation at Youghal had been warned to remain vigilant due to 'the troubles and disquiets that are amongst us'.<sup>991</sup> In late January 1680, the address of the mayor, sheriffs, and citizens of Waterford to Ormond about the numerous abuses committed by the soldiers (threats, abuse, robbery, and murder) was also printed in London.<sup>992</sup>

The pressures on Ranelagh's position also exerted themselves irrespective of his attempts to prevent Ormond from pursuing his accounts. Ranelagh's attempt to explain his conduct to Conway (to whom he owed money) seemed to exemplify this.<sup>993</sup> The perception that the proposed parliamentary bills favoured 'the Papists and the lawyers' ensured that a degree of opposition to them was also now emerging in Ireland. From an English perspective, there were inevitable concerns about Ormond's conduct on specific points: for example, there were delays in providing details about the information and activities of informers in Ireland, and no adequate account of Ranelagh's financial dealings had been compiled as yet.<sup>994</sup> It seems obvious that this period was one of considerable concern to the Protestant interest in Ireland; while the period of the plot saw manifest fears of its destruction from without, it was also possible that in time it might decay from within. The Anglican Church of Ireland had been another victim of the 1650s, and like its Catholic counterpart, many dioceses remained dilapidated throughout the Restoration. Reshuffles were occurring in the established church at this time, with orders for the translation of the bishop of Ossory,

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<sup>989</sup> Ormond to Southwell, 14 Dec. (V & A, F.47.A.40, f 79).

<sup>990</sup> *Domestic Intelligence*, 6 Jan. 1680.

<sup>991</sup> Cited in Harris, *Restoration*, p. 383.

<sup>992</sup> *Protestant (Domestick) Intelligence*, 23 Jan. 1680.

<sup>993</sup> Ranelagh to Conway, 27 Dec. 1679 (CSPD 1679-80, pp 316-8; PRO SP 63/339/57).

<sup>994</sup> Coventry to Ormond, 31 Dec. 1679 (HMC Ormonde, ns, v, p. 260).

Michael Ward, to the see of Derry, and of Thomas Otway, the bishop of Killala, to that of Ossory; the latter was to retain the archdeaconry of Armagh to facilitate the maintenance of the bishopric, an indication of the penury of the Anglican establishment. The condition of that establishment was bound to be more pressing in such circumstances, and its reform a greater imperative.<sup>995</sup> But Otway was problematic, especially for Ormond. Otway had personally decapitated a captured Tory in his own house, which ‘cannot but here after be a ...prejudice to you’, so a personal recommendation by the viceroy might well be queried.<sup>996</sup> Given that Essex ‘makes it his business to catch hold of anything that may prejudice you’, Ormond had no choice but to remain wary of recommending a figure such as Otway for any position.<sup>997</sup> Yet the problem of Tories, especially in Ulster, had not gone away. Rawdon at this time was preparing a major Tory hunt, and on 21 January the proclamation of 14 December 1674 was reiterated, with an increase in the value of the rewards for their capture or death: £100 was now the going price for Redmond O’Hanlon, with £50 for his kinsman and accomplice Leighlin Mac Redmond O’Hanlon of Killeavy.<sup>998</sup>

The ongoing problem of actual Tory activity stood in stark contrast to the chimera of the allegations against a figure such as Oliver Plunkett. Writing from captivity in Dublin Castle, he observed that he had been released from solitary confinement for the simple reason that there was no evidence against him; he had not been imprisoned for practising his pastoral duties.<sup>999</sup> Indeed, it seemed that Plunkett had simply been imprisoned for remaining in Ireland; John Fitzpatrick assured the Vatican that Plunkett would probably be exiled or imprisoned, that execution seemed unlikely, and that he would prevail upon Ormond to do something.<sup>1000</sup> Yet Plunkett himself had remained cautious while imprisoned. He had informed the Vatican that the appointment of new bishops (as had seemingly been suggested) would automatically prompt further repression, which would in turn alienate both the Catholic clergy and the laity from the hierarchy (Plunkett’s stance on this issue had not changed by June 1680, when it apparently had the backing of the other Catholic bishops).<sup>1001</sup>

<sup>995</sup> King to Ormond, 6 Jan. 1680 (*CSPD 1679-80*, p. 368).

<sup>996</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 6 Jan 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 262-3).

<sup>997</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 17 Jan. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 263-4).

<sup>998</sup> Rawdon to Conway, 7 Jan. 1680 (*CSPD 1679-80*, 368-9; PRO SP 63/339/61); Steele, *Proclamations*, ii, p. 115).

<sup>999</sup> Plunkett to Tanari, 17 Jan. 1680 (Hanly, *Plunkett letters*, pp 539-44).

<sup>1000</sup> Tanari to Secretariate of State, 20 Jan 1680 (*Nunziatura di Fiandri*, ii, p 74)

<sup>1001</sup> Plunkett to Tanari, 19 Jan. 1680 (Hanly, *Plunkett letters*, pp 544-6); same to same, 24 June 1680 (Hanly, *Plunkett letters*, pp 547-8).



The attempt to transmit further parliamentary bills to England continued, and for the same reasons: 'for the benefit of his Majesty the security of this his kingdom and the satisfaction of his subjects'. The emphasis remained on the confirmation bill to secure titles, not least because its absence might block the provision of supplies.<sup>1002</sup> On the financial question, the length of Ranelagh's continued stay in England would seemingly be longer than anticipated and consequently his accounting would be delayed.<sup>1003</sup> The reality of Protestant opposition in Ireland to the bills for the Irish parliament also became clearer, as did their occasionally malicious basis; alongside the inevitable involvement of unspecified English political figures, objections had previously been sent to London by Orrery.<sup>1004</sup> Ireland's security remained an issue in more tangible and localised ways, if not in ways that automatically corresponded to the existence of a Catholic plot. The Tory hunt orchestrated by Rawdon sought Tories in general, but Redmond O'Hanlon in particular (hence the proclamation), though as yet it had not succeeded, and the running sore of disorderly soldiers in Waterford prompted the expectation that Granard (as master of the army) would be dispatched to deal with it personally.<sup>1005</sup>

In mid-January 1680 the allegations against Tyrone and the testimony of David Fitzgerald were finally on the verge of being sent to London.<sup>1006</sup> In February the allegations of Hubert Boark and numerous others against Tyrone were presented to the Privy Council, and were passed on to the Committee for Irish affairs.<sup>1007</sup> Across the Irish Sea, the revelations of David Fitzgerald guaranteed that he too would be taken seriously. The Committee for Irish affairs was at this time preoccupied with the accusations against Tyrone and Lord Brittas, examining papers relevant to both cases. It was resolved to imprison Tyrone, Brittas, Pierce Lacy, and numerous others who had been implicated. The peers were to be tried first, and 'that in order thereunto, preparations be made for the speedy calling of a parliament in that kingdom'.<sup>1008</sup> Depositions recounting plans for a possible French assault on Limerick had surprised even Coventry, and those accused, while originally bailed, were now to be arrested for

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<sup>1002</sup> Ormond to unknown, 27 Jan. 1680 (NLI MS 802 f. 8).

<sup>1003</sup> Francis Gwyn to Conway, 27 Jan. 1680 (*CSPD 1679-80*, pp 377-8).

<sup>1004</sup> Lanesborough to Ossory, 28 Jan. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 268).

<sup>1005</sup> Rawdon to Conway, 31 Jan. 1680 (*CSPD 1679-80*, pp 380-2; PRO SP 63/339/65).

<sup>1006</sup> Ormond to unknown, 13 Jan 1680 (Bodl., Carte MS 146, pp 239-41).

<sup>1007</sup> PRO PC 2/68, 382 (6 Feb. 1680).

<sup>1008</sup> PRO PC 2/68, 398 (20 Feb. 1680).

high treason.<sup>1009</sup> There was apparently grumbling in the council over the subsequent decision to bail both Brittas and Tyrone.<sup>1010</sup> But scepticism about the Popish Plot was evident in both public and private: a man in Dublin was reportedly fined 'some hundreds of pounds' for 'speaking maliciously against [Dr] Oates, and Captain Bedloe, and likewise some other scandalous words'.<sup>1011</sup> Ormond noted that the cases against Tyrone and Brittas were not the same plot. If bills were found against them, Tyrone would be tried by his peers. As for Brittas, any prosecution would be forced to rely upon Fitzgerald's testimony, and it was unclear whether he would produce any more.<sup>1012</sup>

However, these were not necessarily the most important Irish issues at the council table in London. In time they would be, but the impending prospect of an Irish parliament seemed to concentrate minds. The Privy Council was still preoccupied by Irish bills in general, and the bill of settlement in particular, which was still being opposed, but which would be transmitted back to Ireland if demanded. In the meantime, the remaining bills were requested, to facilitate their transmission before the end of May.<sup>1013</sup> By the beginning of March, Charles had declared to the Privy Council his intention to have an Irish parliament in session by the end of the month.<sup>1014</sup> The bills were to be transmitted back, notwithstanding reports to the contrary, and after amendments by 'some who are never unmindful when Ireland is named' to guarantee that the oaths of allegiance and supremacy be imposed on all members of the parliament, to correspond with English requirements.<sup>1015</sup>

Naturally, the prospect of a parliament did not appeal to Ranelagh, indisposed and disgruntled in Dublin, where he was 'meeting with nothing but malice and persecution'.<sup>1016</sup> But the bill of settlement was expected to prove acceptable on the basis of the original argument in its favour: the lack of it was likely to hinder any prospective supply.<sup>1017</sup> In any event the parliament was expected to sit in a matter of weeks. Rawdon noted that 'the news is everywhere', and began suggesting figures such as Hans Hamilton and Sir George Acheson as possible candidates for election: the

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<sup>1009</sup> Coventry to Ormond, 21 Feb. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 278).

<sup>1010</sup> Robert Reading to Arran, 27 Feb. 1680 (Carte MS 39, f. 109).

<sup>1011</sup> *Protestant (Domestick) Intelligence*, 2 Mar. 1680.

<sup>1012</sup> Ormond to unknown, 9 Mar. 1680 (Bodl., Carte MS 146, pp 248-5).

<sup>1013</sup> Coventry to Ormond, 6 Mar. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 287).

<sup>1014</sup> Francis Gwyn to Ormond, 6 Mar. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 286).

<sup>1015</sup> Massareene to Conway, 9 Mar. 1680 (*CSPD 1679-80*, p. 414); PRO PC2/68, 425 (9 Mar. 1679).

<sup>1016</sup> Ranelagh to Conway, 13 Mar. 1680 (*CSPD 1679-80*, p. 416; PRO SP 63/339/73)

<sup>1017</sup> Ormond to unknown, 3 Mar. 1680 (NLI MS 802, f. 10).

lobbying for selection was already on. There were also suggestions that a militia bill for Ireland was imminent, along with a strengthened security establishment in which Rawdon and Longford were tipped for senior positions (the latter would be appointed governor of Carrickfergus before the end of the month).<sup>1018</sup> However, such indications of progress were a false dawn, in the light of new developments. In March Shaftesbury presented fresh, and seemingly substantial, allegations to the Privy Council about the existence of a Catholic conspiracy in Ireland; the parliamentary bills were thus delayed, and were not now expected until May, and the parliament would be delayed at least until August.<sup>1019</sup> A committee of the Privy Council, including Coventry and Essex, was instead appointed to investigate the supposed 'Irish Plot', and the various issues raised by Shaftesbury.<sup>1020</sup>

However, in late March 1680 the Waterford assizes had delivered verdicts of *ignoramus* on the indictments against Tyrone for high treason.<sup>1021</sup> The county grand jury was also reported to have thrown out the bill against Tyrone with which they had been presented.<sup>1022</sup> On at least two outstanding counts, the credibility of claims that there was an ongoing Irish plot had been severely damaged. But it was at this juncture that Shaftesbury began to promote allegations of an Irish plot in London, and it was perhaps inevitable, in such circumstances, that Ormond would be targeted once again. Given his previous enthusiasm for an Irish parliament, he was in no position to display his reluctance for the venture in what were now altered political circumstances; technicalities relating to the draft legislation could be disregarded, and it remained possible that 'an ingenious or an interested man may make plausible objections against some part of them either in behalf of the King or of the Protestants, or perhaps even of the Papists'. If parliament was to be called, it was better that it be called quickly, and Ormond anxiously sought news about the King's summer residence, for a sojourn at Hampton Court would inevitably mean delays.<sup>1023</sup>

Yet the plausibility of such new allegations, or indeed any allegations, about an Irish plot remained questionable. 'At my first coming here', noted Conway 'I heard

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<sup>1018</sup> Rawdon to Conway, 20 Mar. 1680 (*CSPD 1679-80*, pp 419-20; PRO SP 63/339/74); Charles II to Ormond, 22 Mar. 1680 (*CSPD 1679-80*, p. 421).

<sup>1019</sup> Massareene to Conway, 23 Mar. 1680 (*CSPD 1679-80*, pp 421-22).

<sup>1020</sup> PRO PC2/68, 454 (24 Mar. 1680).

<sup>1021</sup> Francis Gwyn to Conway, 23 Mar. 1680 (*CSPD 1679-80*, p. 422).

<sup>1022</sup> William Ellis to Cyril Wyche, 17 Mar. 1680 (NAI Wyche Papers, 1/1/33).

<sup>1023</sup> Ormond to Ossory, 31 Mar. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 294-5).

great noise of a plot in Ireland. The king was desired to come from Newmarket and the post into Ireland was stopped till Thursday last; but since that time it has all grown cold'.<sup>1024</sup> More tangibly, Rawdon could report some success against Tories in Ulster, but Redmond O'Hanlon and his associates still remained at large.<sup>1025</sup> Allegations of plot discoveries in Ulster and Connacht incurred both Ormond's cynicism and contempt: 'it was necessary to assure the people, as with new plots so with new actors in them, and we were not forgotten but reserved for the last'. The pressure on him had not eased. He poured scorn on the Irish witnesses who were now appearing in London,<sup>1026</sup> and his scepticism received a boost after the ultimately unsuccessful errand to find evidence in Munster cited in John Fitzgerald's testimony; he had seemingly returned to England while another, obscure informer had gone to Ulster. Shannon, described by Ormond as 'a plain honest gentleman', had been entrusted with overseeing the informer's movements, and was 'ill pitched upon by my lord of Essex for such an employment'. And while aware of his perennially precarious position, Ormond sarcastically noted one circumstance that inadvertently suited him. For 'it is a great misfortune to the discoverers of plots in this kingdom that my lord of Orrery is not alive'.<sup>1027</sup> But unlike Orrery, belief in the Irish plot, in both England and Ireland, was far from dead.<sup>1028</sup> Ormond was willing to gather information on two of the principal informers, William Hetherington and Edmund Murphy to be sent to England, but continued to dismiss suggestions that he resign his post, ostensibly to provide for the king's service at this juncture, and undoubtedly due to his own stubbornness in the face of his enemies. But he was pessimistic about his chances of retaining it.<sup>1029</sup> The transmission of parliamentary bills from London to Dublin was now unlikely before the end of May, and despite Fitzgerald's failure to produce his evidence in Munster yet another unnamed informer, supposedly from Dublin, had returned to Ireland and 'is gone in search of witnesses', with an escort in tow; Ormond expected their return 'by the end of this week and then they shall not stay here long'.<sup>1030</sup> But two of those who had made allegations against Tyrone, Hubert Boark and John MacNamara, were to be

<sup>1024</sup> Conway to Sir Edward Harley, 10 Apr. 1680 (*HMC Rep. 14, app. 2*, p. 365).

<sup>1025</sup> Rawdon to Conway, 12 Apr. 1680 (*CSPD 1679-80*, p. 436; PRO SP 63/339/80).

<sup>1026</sup> Ormond to Ossory, 12 Apr. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 302-3).

<sup>1027</sup> Ormond to Ossory, 14 Apr. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 303).

<sup>1028</sup> Anonymous, 10 Apr. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 302).

<sup>1029</sup> Ormond to Coventry, 14 Apr. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 304-5).

<sup>1030</sup> Ormond to Wyche, 14 Apr. 1680 (NLI MS 803 f. 34).

given their travel expenses to return to Ireland.<sup>1031</sup> Murphy and Hetherington had by now left London and returned to Ireland (the presence of the latter was no secret), but Ormond was nonetheless disgruntled at being sidelined when it came to dealing with Fitzgerald (and subsequently Hetherington), and the implicit suspicion it entailed; Sunderland and Essex were blamed for this.<sup>1032</sup> As for Murphy, Ormond had been unable to understand him while interviewing him, and had instructed that his testimony be written down. But from what he could understand, Ormond noticed that Murphy did not mention any plot resembling what was written down for him, or even what Hetherington had originally claimed. Murphy had mentioned nothing of the kind until he was faced with the prospect of being returned to Dundalk, so 'it might reasonably be suspected that Murphy's pretence to the discovery of a plot was to avoid his being returned to the jail of Dundalk'.<sup>1033</sup> Ormond's suspicions were compounded by his subsequent observation that 'what Murphy declares comes originally from Moyer'; presumably John MacMoyer, who had made similar allegations against Plunkett in the past.<sup>1034</sup>

Scepticism was not confined to the viceroy. Sir Thomas Southwell of Limerick, who would be implicated by David Fitzgerald, was concerned at this time lest disgruntled tenants accused him of involvement in a plot; private malice could easily result in accusations of plotting, and thus incarceration. In this instance Southwell had had claims levelled against him two years previously by a tenant, one 'Gerald' (possibly Fitzgerald), a 'madman' who accused him now of involvement in a plot when there was 'no talk of any such thing either in England or Ireland'; the accusation supposedly arose from a dispute over rent. But 'as to the Irish plot, we believe more is spoken of there than we hear of it here'.<sup>1035</sup> However, on 26 April 1680 a proclamation reiterated that previously issued against the Catholic hierarchy on 16 October 1678, combining it with the rewards set out in that of 26 March 1679.<sup>1036</sup> This was not a new measure, but it suggested an official and public belief in the likely existence of such a plot on the part of an Irish government that remained privately sceptical about it, and a viceroy who was particularly sceptical of the Irish witnesses and their evidence. 'There

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<sup>1031</sup> PRO PC/2/68, 474 (14 Apr. 1680).

<sup>1032</sup> Ormond to unknown, 17 Apr. 1680 (Bodl., Carte MS 146, pp 260-61); Ormond to Ossory, 19 April 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 308).

<sup>1033</sup> Ormond to unknown, 22 Apr. 1680 (Bodl., Carte MS 146, pp 262-4).

<sup>1034</sup> Ormond, to unknown, 1 May 1680 (Bodl., Carte MS 146, p. 267).

<sup>1035</sup> Daniel Hignott to Sir John Perceval, 23 Apr. 1680 (*HMC Egmont*, ii, p. 94).

<sup>1036</sup> Steele, *Proclamations*, ii, p. 116.

has been great industry to make it believed all over England that Ireland is on the brink of confusion and cutting of throats'; merchants had inquired about the condition of Ireland, as uncertainty and fear curtailed trade across the Irish Sea. Ormond blamed Henry Capel (Essex's brother) for this, and resolved to furnish himself with copies of any relevant documentation relating to the plot that might emerge in London. The paucity of evidence guaranteed that any relevant material would be seized upon, or even manipulated. Ormond now identified Hans Hamilton as an enemy, as he had previously supplied Essex with a variety of supposedly incriminating material, such as the confession of MacMoyer, and, more notably, papers found on the body of the Tory Patrick Fleming.<sup>1037</sup>

Fleming was apparently the son of James Fleming of Siddan, County Meath, who had recovered his estates after the Restoration. Of Old English extraction, his early life remains obscure, but according to tradition, he was outlawed after forging a pardon for some retainers, and subsequently absconded and became a Tory; a warrant was issued for his arrest on 8 February 1675. On 30 April 1675, Essex granted Fleming an amnesty of six weeks to remove himself from Ireland. When this time elapsed, the hunt for Fleming began. A prominent, active and destructive Tory, Fleming and his followers operated on the Ulster border, and were associates of Redmond O'Hanlon. Proclaimed on 23 August 1676 for assisting O'Hanlon, he was soon afterwards proclaimed alongside him on 16 October 1676. A reward of £20 was set for both men, who by now were considered to be partners. But Fleming eventually sought the assistance of Oliver Plunkett to obtain a pardon. Plunkett was sympathetic (both were of Old English stock from Meath), and procured from Essex a safe passage for Fleming out of Ireland; Fleming apparently assured Essex in February that he would leave Ireland. Plunkett intended sending him to London, and gave money to his family while Fleming apparently hid in south Armagh prior to departing. However, given that George Rawdon was hunting O'Hanlon at this time, the hunt inevitably extended to Fleming. In February 1678 he was ambushed in Iniskeen, County Monaghan. Supposedly betrayed by an innkeeper (there were also malicious allegations that he was betrayed by Plunkett), Fleming was attacked by the Ardee soldiery while drinking, and after a struggle he and a number of his followers were killed and beheaded. His head was taken to Lisburn, the bodies were put on display, and as Ormond later commented,

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<sup>1037</sup> Ormond to Ossory, 27 Apr. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 312-3).

'a good end was put to that negotiation'.<sup>1038</sup> However, a number of papers were found on Fleming's body, one of which was apparently a letter written by Plunkett under a pseudonym outlining some of the efforts made on Fleming's behalf. In April 1680 it had been suggested that Ormond should send a copy of this letter to England, as part of the proceedings against Plunkett; Hans Hamilton had already forwarded it to Essex. The original, since destroyed, supposedly contained a safe conduct or protection from Ormond, who was to blame Essex for this inevitably embarrassing suggestion, caustically noting to Coventry that Plunkett's efforts were in train under Essex's government. The issue of the letter was clearly intended to discredit Ormond.<sup>1039</sup>

As he had done in other instances, on 10 April Ormond observed that there was a notable lack of material evidence against Oliver Plunkett, though he could be detained simply for remaining in Ireland after the specified period for priests.<sup>1040</sup> Ormond was now warned of a new tactic to discredit him, by foisting militantly anti-Catholic bills upon him. The refusal to accept them would be inevitably embarrassing. Ormond's analysis of 1678, that persecution would merely prove provocative, remained valid, and was compounded by the fact that the execution of such bills would prove disastrous to the already creaking revenue, given the large number of Catholic merchants in Ireland.<sup>1041</sup> Ormond was believed at this time to be preparing a trip to England, yet in Ulster the persistent fear of covenanter activity continued to rear its head with the information that the murderers of Archbishop Sharp might be on their way to Ulster; in the absence of physical descriptions of the suspects, all strangers arriving in Ulster ports were to be examined.<sup>1042</sup> Ossory advised his father to disregard the welter of rumours surrounding him of his involvement 'in a design of betraying Ireland to France', for 'the visible falsity of those reports has rather done us good than harm, in shewing the animosity and grounds upon which our ruin is aimed'. Perhaps less convincing, however, was his suggestion that Ormond's good service to the king in the prospective Irish parliament would serve to 'frustrate' the exclusionist attacks upon him.<sup>1043</sup> In this regard, as in others, little had changed. By now, the Vatican had also

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<sup>1038</sup> Ormond to unknown, 12 Apr. 1680 (Bodl., Carte MS 146, pp 255-6); Ormond to Sunderland, 23 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 500).

<sup>1039</sup> Murray, 'A previously unnoticed letter of Oliver Plunkett', *passim*.

<sup>1040</sup> Burke, *Irish priests in the Penal times*, p. 80.

<sup>1041</sup> Ormond to Ossory, 27 Apr. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 312-13).

<sup>1042</sup> Rawdon to Conway, 28 Apr. 1680 (*CSPD 1679-80*, pp 452-53; PRO SP 63/339/81)

<sup>1043</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 30 Apr. 1680 (*HMC Rep. 7, app.*, p. 738).

noted the emergence of the 'Irish Plot'. The information it possessed included the questionable assumption that Ormond was negotiating with the French to procure an invasion of Ireland with the assistance of York. Such allegations as were reported were clearly intended to discredit both Ormond and York, with the further possibility that somehow, they would serve to undermine Irish support for the king.<sup>1044</sup>

'Yours, and I may presume to say, the Kings enemies, use all their artifices to blast our reputations', was Ossory's observation to his beleaguered father.<sup>1045</sup> He proffered advice about the proposed Irish parliament, stating that if Ireland was indeed quiet, and if the parliament could be called despite the objections of his detractors, Ormond should press for it 'with all imaginable vigour'. If not, he should inform the King of the reasons for his seemingly drastic change of mind. Ossory also offered a warning about Essex, who was intent on opposing such bills as Ormond presented.<sup>1046</sup> As for the embargo on communications from England, it applied only to the mails; Sir William Petty had come over by sea and informed Ormond of events in London, which in itself reminded the viceroy of John Fitzgerald, or more specifically of 'a servant of Sir William Waller going with him to Bristol and discovering there Fitzgerald's being a cheat'; presumably a reference to the letters found in Fitzgerald's possession. News had reached Dublin of Fitzgerald's arrival in Munster with an escort, but the ban on communications aroused Ormond's suspicion once again: 'I must suspect it is designed that the proceeding is designed to be concealed from me and from thence that something is informed against me'.<sup>1047</sup>

The secretive proceedings around the witnesses tended to prompt suspicions as to their various motivations and background, which in some cases were justified; the witnesses against Tyrone, for example, had withdrawn from his trial when their own immunity from prosecution expired. As for their backgrounds, John MacNamara was accused of horse stealing, and Hubert Bourk of other unspecified misdemeanours. Both had absconded to England. Such witnesses seemed common; Ormond had also heard of yet another Fitzgerald, 'who hath made much noise in England, and has received countenance from a great man there.'<sup>1048</sup> Ormond's contempt for them was evident.

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<sup>1044</sup> Tanari to Secretariate of State, 27 Apr. 1680 (*Nunziatura di Fiandri*, ii, p. 75).

<sup>1045</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 6 Apr. 1680 (*HMC Rep. 7, app.*, p. 738).

<sup>1046</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 10 Apr. 1680 (*HMC Rep. 7, app.*, p. 738).

<sup>1047</sup> Ormond to Ossory, 10 Apr. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 298-9).

<sup>1048</sup> Ormond to Ossory, 10 Apr. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 298-99).



I do not so much wonder at the scandals cast upon us now as that it was not done sooner. But it was necessary to amuse the people, as with new plots so with new actors in them. The discoveries now on foot in the north and in the west of this kingdom can come to nothing by reason of the extravagant villainy and folly of the informers, who are such creatures that no schoolboy would trust them with a design for the robbing of an orchard. My Lord of Essex's tool is a silly drunken vagabond that cares not for hanging a month hence if in the meantime he may solace himself with brandy and tobacco. Murphy is all out as debauched, but a degree wiser than the other. The other fellow brought by my Lord of Shaftesbury to the council broke prison being in execution, and now the sheriff or jailor are sued for the debt. This is their true character, but perhaps not fit for you to give of them. If rogues they must be that discover roguery, these must be the best discoverers, because they are the greatest rogues.<sup>1049</sup>

The importance of the Irish witnesses had become evident by May 1680, irrespective of their questionable characters. Charles had instructed that these witnesses be kept apart from strangers, that their examinations be continued, and that the information revealed be kept confidential until he had seen it in full. It also seemed obvious that the imprisoned Oliver Plunkett would become the subject of at least some allegations. One of the witnesses, John MacMoyer, had claimed that while in Marseille in 1673 he had seen a letter from Plunkett to Propaganda Fide in Rome, claiming that 60,000 men were ready in Ireland but lacked weapons, and requesting assistance on this point.<sup>1050</sup> Plunkett had remained in Dublin Castle without charge since his arrest in December 1679; technically, his only offence was to have defied the proclamation ordering the banishment of Catholic clergy from Ireland. However, any interrogation of Plunkett was deferred until further definite information on his activities came to light, as he would almost certainly deny any charge.<sup>1051</sup>

By now numerous Irish informers had arrived in London. For others, though, the existence of such witnesses was in itself questionable, and posed problems of a different nature. Ossory, writing to his father, observed that Essex had become 'so diligent in discovering Irish plots'; but given that Essex had been provided with such information by Hamilton, it seemed reasonable to wonder why he had not noticed such things when he had actually served as viceroy.<sup>1052</sup> These were peripheral issues when compared to the continuing preoccupation with an Irish parliament. By now, Ormond was willing to emphasise the Catholic threat, and their alleged intention 'to design and

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<sup>1049</sup> Ormond to Ossory, 12 Apr. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 302-3).

<sup>1050</sup> Secretary Jenkins to Sunderland, 7 May 1680 (*CSPD 1679-80*, p .467).

<sup>1051</sup> Ormond to Coventry, 10 Apr. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 299-300).

<sup>1052</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 8 May 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 315).

struggle for the restitution of their religion in the Kings dominions'. Bills were in preparation to 'contribute much to the end proposed', and Ormond sought to strengthen his case by stressing the pre-eminence of his own experience and observations in qualifying him to decide upon such matters. But he anticipated opposition to the legislation primarily on financial grounds, not to mention factional hostility disguised as 'zeal against Popery'.<sup>1053</sup> Inevitably, the questions of Ranelagh's accounts and Irish legislation came back onto the political agenda at this point.<sup>1054</sup> In the meantime, Henry Ingoldsby (one of the members of the Irish council deemed 'zealous' by Shaftesbury<sup>1055</sup>) was to be dismissed from the council, 'by reason of his factious carriage in England, and traducing of the government here'; however, the precise details of this remain obscure.<sup>1056</sup>

The reasoning behind the contentious bill of settlement was straightforward: the sheer extent of inquiries into land titles in Ireland (commissions for which were now being blocked in Dublin anyway) was proving both destabilising and demoralizing, discouraging as it did economic endeavour. The bill inevitably sought to end this practice,<sup>1057</sup> and Ormond anticipated the difficulties posed by the questions of revenue and confirmation of estates, especially as the latter would end the profitable business of land speculation.<sup>1058</sup> The bills would probably require greater modification to ensure their acceptance in London; Jenkins wanted to see them, and was inclined to be supportive of Ormond in his endeavours. He undertook to impress upon Charles the significance of the issue of concealed lands, and 'the exactions and exasperations which they unavoidably bring on'. As for those witnesses now in Ireland, they were to be kept under close guard, so as not to be 'tampered with' or given an opportunity to abscond; explicit within this was the possibility that they might yet fabricate a story, and implicitly, that they were not to be trusted. The details of their security were to be left to Ormond.<sup>1059</sup> Ormond duly acknowledged the receipt of the relevant witnesses against Plunkett, but the lack (as yet) of any direct testimony from David Fitzgerald seemed likely to cripple any prospective case in Limerick.

<sup>1053</sup> Ormond to Jenkins, 16 May 1680 (*CSPD 1679-80*, p. 482; PRO SP63/339/87).

<sup>1054</sup> Ossory to Ormond, 21 May 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 324).

<sup>1055</sup> PRO, Shaftesbury papers 30/24/50 f. 163.

<sup>1056</sup> Ormond to Ossory, 25 May 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 327).

<sup>1057</sup> Lord Lieutenant and Council to Sunderland, 28 May 1680 (*CSPD 1679-80*, pp 495-6; PRO SP63/339/91).

<sup>1058</sup> Ormond to Jenkins, 16 June 1680 (*CSPD 1679-80*, pp 516-7; PRO SP63/339/96-7).

<sup>1059</sup> Jenkins to Ormond, 5 June 1680 (*CSPD 1679-80*, pp 505-6; PRO SP63/341/11).

On 23 July Oliver Plunkett's trial finally took place in Dundalk; or more properly, there was an attempt to try him. John MacMoyer had opposed the venue, and had sought to have it moved to a more convenient location. But this failed, and Plunkett was brought to Dundalk on 21 July, and was indicted before the jury on 23 July. There were thirty-two witnesses available to refute the allegations that Plunkett had raised an army of 70,000 Catholics to wipe out Protestants and had planned to facilitate a French invasion (these were the same allegations on which he would later be convicted in London). However, Edmund Murphy, who was due to testify against him, had previously escaped from Dundalk jail and was afraid to testify there lest he be hanged himself, and had fled to England to obtain a pardon. MacMoyer, who Plunkett suspected was being backed by Phelim O'Neill and Anthony Daly, two clerics with whom he had previously clashed, simply declined to turn up. Presumably, the protections Murphy and MacMoyer had sought from Henry Jones had been deemed insufficient. Consequently, the trial collapsed, and Plunkett was returned to Dublin. He was advised to ensure that any retrial should take place in Dublin at the next assizes at All Souls, with a jury from Dundalk. Plunkett was confident that this could be arranged, but he would be transferred to London before it could be done.<sup>1060</sup>

Yet irrespective of the reality of events there, Ireland continued to garner attention in London. According to Longford, the Irish revenue farmers were threatening to quit should the draft bills for an Irish parliament be accepted as they stood. While demanding their 'advance money' from the treasury, they argued that Ireland was in no position to support more taxes. They had also issued a dark warning that if the current revenue farm was to be dissolved, 'that though they all be hanged at Tyburn some great men shall pay for it, and dearly too'. The possibility of an Irish parliament being convened in the near future was very real at this juncture. If it sat, the farmers were prepared to state their opinion of the condition of Ireland before the English parliament, along with their reasons for opposing the draft legislation. The farmers also hinted that Charles could, by the law as it then stood, obtain the £300,000 he was entitled to, and that Ormond 'will find more difficulties...then he thinks'. Despite this, Ormond could soon report that Ranelagh 'has brought his accounts to a balance, which I am told will

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<sup>1060</sup> Ó Fiaich, *Oliver Plunkett*. pp 76-8.

weigh heavy on him and his partners...it has not been for want of ability or industry'.<sup>1061</sup>

Ormond was also given advance notice of an intelligence report on Ireland drawn up for the King, and based upon the memorandums previously submitted by Granard. The substance of it was not new: that the dispossessed Irish might yet join any prospective invasion force. The Irish army and defences in general were in no less appalling a condition than had previously been noted, but this would not be alleviated in the immediate future, for the prospective parliamentary legislation would require further consideration before the parliament could actually sit, and some bills would have to be revised. But interim measures were proposed. Troop deployments earmarked for Tangiers had already been cancelled. The army could be moved around (to rid its ranks of tenants), while 1,000 additional foot soldiers were to be recruited in England. There was also now the suggestion that key state salaries and pensions (such as that of the Lord Chancellor) be stopped or suspended to free up funds: one provisional estimate hinted at a saving thereby of £23,044 per annum.<sup>1062</sup>

Granard reported to the English Privy Council on 18 August 1680. Acting for Ormond, he provided a detailed report on the condition of Ireland, substantively similar to those he had already provided, and with disturbingly specific details: only 2,000 men were fit for service in Ireland, and the only mounted guns in the kingdom were at the new fort at Kinsale. At least £100,000 would be needed to adequately address this.<sup>1063</sup> But Granard was successful, and his mission seemed to prompt imminent (if not immediate) movement on the parliamentary bills. However, there was one difficulty: the proposed bill of settlement would trigger a clause entitling Ranelagh to payments on concealed lands regardless of the expiration of his revenue contract, and such payment was impossible until the value of such lands was determined.<sup>1064</sup> Despite this admittedly major obstacle, the transmitted bills seemed acceptable: none, bar that on ecclesiastical livings, was laid aside, though all were questioned. The finance bill for raising a subsidy of £200,000 was the major sticking point in this instance, mainly due to the objections of Sir James Shaen, the Irish surveyor-general, who had become the principal figure out of the eleven revenue farmers who had succeeded Ranelagh in 1675. Having been suspected of corruption in his management of the Irish revenue, his

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<sup>1061</sup> Ormond to Cork, 24 July 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 353).

<sup>1062</sup> Francis Gwyn to Ormond, 14 Aug. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 379-81).

<sup>1063</sup> PRO PC2/69, 72-3 (18 Aug 1680).

<sup>1064</sup> Longford to Ormond, 17 Aug. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 381-4).

removal from the position had already been sought by both Ranelagh and Ormond prior to the plot revelations. Shaen's position seemed strong; he was well connected at court, but perhaps more significantly, he had ensured that payment of the farm rents had not been disrupted. He had argued that raising £200,000 in Ireland was impossible given Ireland's financial condition: huge sums were still outstanding.<sup>1065</sup> Instead, Shaen proposed an optimistic alternative to raise £288,000, a suggestion that would eventually be seen as viable. Shaen had proposed something similar in June 1680, and the eventual acceptance of such proposals would ensure that an Irish parliament did not sit. This was deeply suggestive of how little real power Ormond possessed in his station: the fact that the details of Shaen's proposals were withheld from him only confirmed this.<sup>1066</sup>

But Ormond's personal prestige, combined with his official role, lent considerable weight to his case that the legislation should be proceeded with.<sup>1067</sup> Irrespective of the differing views held about an Irish parliament in and of itself, there was undoubtedly consensus on the necessity to overhaul the military establishment in Ireland. It was agreed to stop certain wages to the value of *c.* £25,000. Charles, however, blocked the stop on Lord Chancellor Boyle's salary; it was suggested that this was intended to put Boyle in an awkward position and thus procure his resignation, for the lords might not overrule Charles should he later agree to the proposal. Ranelagh remained opposed to a parliament, but the tide of opinion seemed to be turning in its favour. Granard and Longford had both been questioned on a variety of issues pertaining to it, and it was concluded that Ireland was in a better condition than had otherwise been claimed by figures such as Shaen.<sup>1068</sup> In Shaen's case there may have been other motivations than zeal for the king's service: he was aligned with Orrery through marriage, and with Ranelagh through the undertaking, though they had later entered into dispute; he had also been an agent for lands at the Restoration, and Ormond was claimed to have stopped the lucrative trade in grants that such a role would have engendered: such activities would certainly be stopped by any bill confirming Irish estates.<sup>1069</sup> In such circumstances, Ormond could readily reiterate his commitment to holding a parliament and his reasons for doing so.<sup>1070</sup> It was expected

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<sup>1065</sup> Shaen to Privy Council, 18 Aug. 1680 (*CSPD 1679-80*, pp 611-5).

<sup>1066</sup> Egan, 'Finance and the government of Ireland', ii, pp 112-3, 114-7.

<sup>1067</sup> Jenkins to Ormond, 21 Aug. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p 386).

<sup>1068</sup> Longford to Ormond, 21 Aug. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 388-91).

<sup>1069</sup> Gilbert Library MS 207, ff 13-4.

<sup>1070</sup> Ormond to Arlington, 23 Aug. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 392).

that it would be called soon.<sup>1071</sup> The Committee for Irish Affairs ordered that estimates be drawn up as to what the expected sum of £200,000 was to be spent on, and also that the condition of Ireland in terms of its potential for collecting further revenue be assessed.<sup>1072</sup> Charles, along with Coventry, Jenkins and Sir William Temple, was inclined to take Ormond's side against Shaen in the disputes over the revenue, despite his apparent efficiency. In turn, Essex and Laurence Hyde, the first commissioner of the treasury, backed Shaen. The Irish parliamentary bills were recommended for scrutiny once again; having being read before the lords, amendments were proposed to the supply bill.<sup>1073</sup> Ormond was by now unimpressed by Shaen's activities, and was inclined to be wary of him.<sup>1074</sup> Michael Boyle had warned of unrest amongst churchmen should the bill relating to church livings be rejected.<sup>1075</sup> But in the context of the ongoing debates about an Irish parliament this was perhaps a relatively minor concern.

Shaen, however, had further objections that seemed to attract the crucial support of Henry Bennet, earl of Arlington, at court. Shaen queried why the revenue farmers had not been consulted in the drafting of the bill for additional duties; his objections were to be forwarded to Ormond.<sup>1076</sup> Jenkins was optimistic that the supply bill would be accepted (it was by now on its second reading), but he conceded that Shaen had compelling objections.<sup>1077</sup> But after this there were other problems. According to Boyle, at best there would be a general unwillingness to provide more money to the government without evident necessity. If this stance were seen to have support in England, the prospect of getting any money from a parliament would be jeopardised.<sup>1078</sup> Essex too remained opposed to the bill for £200,000. This came amidst new claims of an imminent Catholic plot 'to be executed this month by massacre upon the Protestants',<sup>1079</sup> which may also have dovetailed with other rumours claiming that York was now supposedly intent on going to Ireland.<sup>1080</sup> Ormond remained sceptical of Shaen, and of his contention that Ireland was too poor to pay what was being

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<sup>1071</sup> BL Add MS 28,930, f. 157.

<sup>1072</sup> Gwyn to Ormond, 24 Aug. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 393-4).

<sup>1073</sup> Longford to Ormond, 24 Aug. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 394-7).

<sup>1074</sup> Ormond to Longford, 25 Aug. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 398).

<sup>1075</sup> Boyle to Ormond, 24 Aug. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 397-8).

<sup>1076</sup> Arlington to Ormond, 28 Aug. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 399-400).

<sup>1077</sup> Jenkins to Ormond, 28 Aug. 1680 (*CSPD, 1679-80*, p. 625).

<sup>1078</sup> Boyle to Ormond, 31 Aug. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 402-3).

<sup>1079</sup> Longford to Ormond, 31 Aug. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p 403).

<sup>1080</sup> R. Mulyse to Sir John Ellis, 3 Sept. 1680 (BL Add MS 28,875, f. 124)

demanded. Ormond claimed that Ireland was, at this juncture, more prosperous than at any time since the reign of Henry II; this was proven by an increase in trade, and in the value of Irish lands. After all, Ormond was (as he pointed out himself) in a good position to know this. Here was an implicit assertion that Ireland, despite its apparent vulnerability, remained stable. But as for the Irish parliament, in his view it was no longer possible for it to sit before the English parliament sat.<sup>1081</sup> English opposition to the proposed bills was far too strong to permit this within such a timeframe.<sup>1082</sup> Indeed, no Scottish parliament would be called during this period either: Charles had enough difficulties with one parliament in England, let alone one in each capital city in the three kingdoms. Such difficulties eroded the viceroy's morale, for Ormond was disillusioned by his station as much as the continual intrigues against him, and he claimed that he remained in his post through loyalty alone.<sup>1083</sup> But the detrimental effect on the authority of the government was noted by others such as Boyle, who noted that some bills were to be sent to Ireland 'to begin a parliament, which I confess is now become my dread. They have taken off the authority and reputation of the Government by their objections against our transmission'.<sup>1084</sup> Ormond continued his tirades against Shaen, given that his arguments provided the perfect pretext to those who would oppose any Irish parliament. He had also bemoaned the 'ill condition the kingdom is in when it is threatened with Popish plots and a French invasion'; but advertising this fact was not prudent; it could prompt speculation about the Irish government's perceived laxity.<sup>1085</sup>

Certainly, there were concerns in Ireland about the legacy of Ranelagh's brutal and extortionate business practices in the counties bordering Dublin, and 'what does your lordship expect was the usage of the more remote and barbarous parts of the kingdom, where it is said that the name of Ranelagh is so much abhorred as the name of St Patrick is adored. St Patrick they tell us turned all venomous corruption out of the kingdom, and Ranelagh hath brought all in'.<sup>1086</sup> However, the preoccupation of the English government with Irish affairs of this nature was perhaps an interlude, as it soon gave way to renewed concerns about the lurking possibility of an Irish Catholic conspiracy. Ormond was to be accused of complicity in a plot, by withholding

<sup>1081</sup> Ormond to Jenkins, 1 Sept. 1680 (*CSPD, 1680-1*, pp 1-2; PRO SP63/339/130)

<sup>1082</sup> Ormond to Coventry, 1 Sept. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 404).

<sup>1083</sup> Ormond to Thomas Sheridan, 1 Sept. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 408-9).

<sup>1084</sup> Boyle to Ormond, 4 Sept. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 413).

<sup>1085</sup> Ormond to Wyche, 25 Sept. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 433-4).

<sup>1086</sup> Robert Gorges to Lansborough, 7 Oct. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 441-3).

information, and by his alleged leniency on prosecuting those accused. Shaftesbury wanted him ejected from the Irish government, and discredited. In this light, John Fitzpatrick had been welcomed by Sunderland on his return; his recent conversion to the established church was apparently respected.<sup>1087</sup> It was reported amongst the Anglican episcopate that papal emissaries were abroad, armed with commissions permitting the conversion of the English and the Irish.<sup>1088</sup> Equally, rumours emerged once more in early October of the appointment of 'a new lieutenant of Ireland'.<sup>1089</sup> Yet Ormond received an unlikely vote of confidence at this juncture. A Franciscan friar of Old English extraction, George Coddan, petitioned Ormond for release from custody; being old and in ill-health, he had been unable to leave Ireland as specified by proclamation, and having supported the 1661 remonstrance, he had been persecuted. He was supposedly harassed by 'Henry O'Hugh', apparently Plunkett's vicar-general, and also by Tories at the behest of 'Shean O'Neill', supposedly Owen Roe's bastard son. He was betrayed as Tory to William Hamilton and imprisoned. Perhaps to mollify the viceroy, Coddan had enclosed a Gaelic panegyric claiming, amongst other things, that Ormond was greater than Cuchulainn.<sup>1090</sup> Perhaps ironically, Coddan himself would join the ranks of Irish informers in London in the coming months.

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<sup>1087</sup> Longford to Ormond, 5 Oct. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 439-40).

<sup>1088</sup> Bishop of Exeter to Sancroft, 11 Oct. 1680 (*Tanner letters*, p. 429).

<sup>1089</sup> BL Add MS 28,875, f. 134.

<sup>1090</sup> Coddan to Ormond, 19 Oct. 1680 (*Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 10 Feb 1851, ser 1, vol 5 (1850-53), pp 71-5).



## Chapter 9:

### November 1680-July 1681

Even before the allegations of the Irish witnesses had been presented to the lords, there had been suggestions in Ireland that the ostensible evidence may have been manipulated. Obscure allegations about a plot strongly resembling that described by David Fitzgerald had been made in Limerick by two equally obscure figures, David Nash and Donough Lyne. The resemblance was itself suspicious: John Odell, the J.P. who had taken their testimony, had noted that Fitzgerald's allegations 'but magnifies' those of David Nash, and Odell had been alarmed by suggestions that he himself had coached and manipulated these witnesses.<sup>1091</sup> Some days later, Donough Lyne was brought before Ormond in Kilkenny to 'subscribe' to his testimony, which, Ormond reminded him, 'flatly contradicted' what he had previously sworn. Under pressure from the viceroy, the admittedly ill and incoherent Lyne admitted that 'he knew nothing of the plot but what he had from Nash'. Nash was brought in and, naturally, disagreed. But after private consultation with Lyne, Nash eventually admitted that, while certain elements of what he had claimed were indeed true, 'whatever he had said and sworn in his information taken upon oath of a plot was totally false'. For example, he had apparently accused a number of unspecified (though seemingly prominent) individuals of meeting to discuss a plot, but now stated that 'it was a meeting only of merriment, and not to lay any plot'; once again, sinister constructions could easily be placed upon innocuous events. When asked why he had acted in this way, he 'answered that fear of his life and promise of reward had made him first accuse them, and he had been so threatened that he was induced to say anything that might save his life'.<sup>1092</sup> However, Donough Lyne later claimed that Odell and John Massey, the other J.P. who had heard Nash's evidence, had sought to bribe and threaten Nash so that he would change his account to correspond with that of David Fitzgerald.<sup>1093</sup> But reality could be disregarded: when Arran later told a parliamentary committee headed by Shaftesbury

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<sup>1091</sup> John Odell to Gerald Fitzgerald, 11 Oct. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 444-5).

<sup>1092</sup> 'Examination of David Nash before Lord Lieutenant and Privy Council', 16 Oct. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 452-4).

<sup>1093</sup> Donough Leyne (sic) to Capt. Drury Wray, 29 Oct. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 463-5).

about this recantation, Shaftesbury's response was that 'he did not wonder at it when the chancellor and Sir John Davys took the examinations'.<sup>1094</sup>

In late October, Longford had advised Ormond to hasten the production of another account of his administration's conduct, 'for that will be an evident vindication of the government there in their proceedings upon the discovery of the plot, and will be a conviction of the witnesses falsehood': it was presumably intended to counter or preempt the impending Irish testimonies, including possible allegations against Ormond by Sir Henry Ingoldsby. He also reported that Thomas Samson was now attempting to implicate Michael Boyle and Ormond in the allegations against Tyrone, with Ormond to be named as 'head of the plot in Ireland'.<sup>1095</sup> Ormond himself was aware that 'overtures of discovery of the Plot in this kingdom have of late multiplied upon us', but remained sceptical of them, for reasons that made perfect sense in this political climate.

It is most rationally to be believed that there was and is a concurrence betwixt the disaffected to both kingdoms to subvert government and religion, and I would as gladly find it out and prevent it as any man; my freehold, and that a better than the King of France or the Papists would allow me if either of them were masters, being at stake.<sup>1096</sup>

Ormond was quite capable of damning 'the Irish Papists...having been scandalized, persecuted and betrayed by them at home and abroad'; he was hardly likely to have become reconciled to them even in his old age.<sup>1097</sup> Yet while evidently exasperated (as he had been throughout this period), he remained quietly confident at this juncture, in stark contrast to his despondency and exasperation in the early stages of the plot. The narrative that Longford had sought was intended, in part, to counter the imminent accusations against Ormond expected to be made in London by Ingoldsby, who was 'to give evidence of the plot in Ireland, with some pretended discouragements the witnesses here have met with'.<sup>1098</sup> Yet Ormond was quietly dismissive of Ingoldsby's prospective allegations: 'I know not what he can say, if nobody help his invention, that can reflect on anybody here'.<sup>1099</sup>

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<sup>1094</sup> Arran to Ormond, 9 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 483-4).

<sup>1095</sup> Longford to Ormond, 30 Oct. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 467-8).

<sup>1096</sup> Ormond to Burlington, 31 Oc. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 470-1).

<sup>1097</sup> Ormond to Conway, 1 Nov 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 471-2).

<sup>1098</sup> Francis Gywn to Ormond, 3 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 476).

<sup>1099</sup> Ormond to Arran, 7 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 483).

Arran and Longford furnished Ormond with detailed and precise accounts of the proceedings of the Irish witnesses before the lords (at least up to 6 November).<sup>1100</sup> The viceroy's confidence may have been justified: a climbdown was subsequently evident in terms of the nature of the allegations to be levelled against him. Instead of being accused of masterminding or directing the plot in Ireland, he was to be accused by MacMoyer, Callaghan and Finan of obstructing their testimonies and harassing them, hardly as serious a charge as active complicity in any plot.<sup>1101</sup> But this was strongly suggestive of the fact there was no evidence to justify the more serious allegation.

On 7 November Ormond had acknowledged an order of 27 October to send Tyrone to London, and had given notice that he intended to do so as soon as was possible, according to the instructions he had received. The full details of the accusations against him were in Coventry's possession, and Ormond assured Sunderland that he intended to send over a full account of the proceedings of the Irish government with regard to the plot, perhaps along the lines of Longford's previous suggestion.<sup>1102</sup> But equally, one observer noted the extradition of Tyrone as a 'dangerous precedent'.<sup>1103</sup> Charges against him had been thrown out in Ireland, yet he was to be tried again on essentially the same charges in an English court, which naturally called into question the authority of the Irish government and its ability to administer the law. The credibility of the allegations was officially sufficient to ensure that, on 15 November, a proclamation would be issued in Dublin offering pardons for all disclosures of a plot made within the next two months; again, this was a reproduction of an English proclamation.<sup>1104</sup>

Military matters remained a priority. The next day, 16 November, Charles ordered Ormond to address the condition of the army in Ireland, to replace those officers who proved unable to attend their commands within three months, to strengthen its discipline, and to implement courts martial as required in order to achieve this. The Scottish regiment was to be brought back to its original strength, and one thousand extra troops were to be sent to Ireland from England.<sup>1105</sup> Yet equally, other concerns about the Irish military (such as it was) were evident in a debate in the

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<sup>1100</sup> Arran to Ormond, 6 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 477-8); Longford to Ormond, 6 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 479-81).

<sup>1101</sup> Longford to Ormond, 16 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 490-91).

<sup>1102</sup> Ormond to Sunderland, 7 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 481-2); Ormond to unknown, 7 Nov. 1680 (Bodl., Carte MS 146, pp 301-3).

<sup>1103</sup> Gilbert Library MS 109, p. 14.

<sup>1104</sup> Steele, *Proclamations*, ii, p. 116.

<sup>1105</sup> King to Ormond, 16 Nov. 1680 (*CSPD 1680-81*, p. 86).

commons that resulted in an address to the king, about the prudence of continuing to provide supply for the garrison in Tangiers, given the large numbers of Catholic Irish troops there; one inference to be drawn from this was that they might yet be used in England.<sup>1106</sup>

It was an ironic fear in the light of Peter Talbot's death. He died in custody on 18 November; the report in the official gazette also noted that Ormond was sending Tyrone and the other suspects to England as requested.<sup>1107</sup> Nothing had ever been proven against Talbot, and no material evidence had ever emerged against him. Officially, this did not dissuade the Irish government from dutifully obeying its orders, and from continuing to assist the ongoing investigations in England (though equally, Ormond had little choice but to obey them). On 29 November it was reported in London that the king had received the relevant Irish material sent over by Ormond.<sup>1108</sup> Ormond's instructions with regards to the condition of the Irish army were evident in proclamations issued on the same day, ordering that unauthorized absences and excessive leave from the army were to be punished by dismissal, and that, based on the previous proclamations for dealing with Catholic weapons, even Catholics with licences to hold arms were now ordered to surrender both weapons and their licences. Searches were to take place, and such weapons as were seized were to be sent to Dublin. In addition, it was ordered that Protestants were not to hold weapons on behalf of Catholic friends or neighbours.<sup>1109</sup> Such continual prudence could be easily be seen as proof that there was indeed something to fear.

Rumours could thrive in such a suggestive climate. It was claimed by one John Jephson – who may or may not have been the same person implicated in the plot to assassinate Ormond in December 1678 - that while travelling in France in 1676, he had overheard French officers speaking of unsuccessful attempts to land weapons and ammunition in Galway, 'about the time we expected the landing of the French and Dutch at Kinsale'.<sup>1110</sup> This could probably be disregarded, given that at this time William Hetherington was seeking more witnesses in order to prove something similar:

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<sup>1106</sup> *Commons jn.*, ix, pp 665-7.

<sup>1107</sup> *London Gazette*, 25-9 Nov. 1680.

<sup>1108</sup> *Lords jn.*, xiii, p. 694.

<sup>1109</sup> Steele, *Proclamations*, ii, p. 116.

<sup>1110</sup> John Jephson to Archbishop of Tuam, 29 Nov. 1680 (*CSPD 1680-81*, p. 94).

he suggested that a pardon could be obtained for the Armagh cleric Patrick Tyrell if he confessed to an involvement in the plot, but 'Doctor Plunkett will surely be hanged'.<sup>1111</sup>

Whispered allegations against Ormond were, yet again, giving way to more concrete assertions. He was accused of permitting assemblies of Catholic clergy in Dublin, of disarming Protestants with undue haste (in one day), and of permitting Catholics to retain weapons. He was also accused of delaying the arrest of the late Peter Talbot, of not seizing either his or Richard Talbot's papers, and of leaving the latter at liberty (where he was supposedly favoured by Arran and Ossory); of raising a Catholic regiment; and of having being made Lord Lieutenant to facilitate a parliament, thence to raise an army to be directed at England 'to set up arbitrary government'.<sup>1112</sup> These were reminiscent of previous allegations made against the viceroy, and two weeks previously Arran had expressed the suspicion to his father that his letters were being intercepted; there may have been a degree of orchestration in the formulation of such allegations.<sup>1113</sup> Longford conceded to Ormond that his efforts on his behalf had not been completely successful, and that there were rumours abroad that an attempt to impeach him was imminent. Information had been collected to use against him, and to procure his dismissal from his post, 'which is not thought secure, but in a confiding hand or with a thorough English Protestant (which is now the phrase in mode)'.<sup>1114</sup>

If this was the case, than attempts to discredit Ormond probably did not stem from malice. There were continuing rumours of unrest in Ireland: Arran had heard of 'great apprehensions and new discoveries from Munster'.<sup>1115</sup> Ormond laid this at the door of Orrery's sister, carrying on her brother's work through correspondents who were 'as zealous as he was, but not so inventive'.<sup>1116</sup> Attitudes towards the (Catholic) Irish in Munster remained somewhat hostile; as one Cork landowner noted, 'whenever you mention an English tenant he shall certainly from me have the preference before an Irish'.<sup>1117</sup> And in Connacht, the Anglican archbishop of Tuam, John Vesey, requested that Ormond send a company of foot to the town, due to a possible repeat of the

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<sup>1111</sup> Hetherington to John Jackson, 30 Nov. 1680 (Bodl., Carte MS 39, f. 223).

<sup>1112</sup> 'Articles against the Duke of Ormond', 4 Dec. 1680 (*CSPD 1680-81*, p. 98).

<sup>1113</sup> Arran to Ormond, 20 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 494).

<sup>1114</sup> Longford to Ormond, 4 Dec. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 520-21).

<sup>1115</sup> Arran to Ormond, 4 Dec. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 519-20).

<sup>1116</sup> Ormond to Arran, 13 Dec. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 523-4).

<sup>1117</sup> Sir John Perceval to 'Mr Taylor', 11 Dec. 1680 (*HMC Egmont*, ii, p 102).

hardships of 'the late rebellion'.<sup>1118</sup> Such latent fears could also be kept alive by the ongoing activities of Tories, which had been a crucial element in the testimonies of figures such as Edmund Murphy. By this time attempts had already been made to involve certain Tories in the plot, albeit as witnesses rather than participants: Henry Jones was involved in ongoing efforts to procure a pardon for Redmond O'Hanlon, in exchange for his assistance in bringing other Tories to heel, after which the pardon was to be extended to O'Hanlon's associates: such terms had been agreed by the beginning of November, and O'Hanlon himself had apparently instigated the negotiations.<sup>1119</sup> But soon the nature of these efforts changed, as the pardon was to be offered to O'Hanlon in exchange for his testifying about allegations of French-sponsored insurrection in Ireland; Jones was also involved in promoting this.<sup>1120</sup>

Around this time Hans Hamilton, who was involved in the search for O'Hanlon, reported to Ormond on the activities of the informer Owen Murphy, who had presented him with authorisation from Ormond and the Irish council (prompted by an order of the English House of Lords) to apprehend and send to Dublin whoever Murphy deemed useful 'to the discovery of the Popish Plot in Ireland'. Hamilton was wary of this, but assisted Murphy anyway by sending suspects to Dublin as requested. He told Ormond of this to pre-empt any complaints against him for doing so (he was after all, under instructions), but he also sent Ormond letters that were found in the possession of Redmond O'Hanlon's mother-in-law. Hamilton's conclusion was that 'if under pretence of discovering the plot such bloody murderers shall be pardoned, it will be good encouragement for others to turn Tories'.<sup>1121</sup>

The letters in question were from Deborah Annesley (Henry Jones's daughter) and her husband Francis to Katherine O'Hanlon. The first, dated 7 December, suggested that Ormond was prepared to advocate the offer of a pardon to O'Hanlon; after all, the initial offer was in exchange for his assistance in dealing with other Tories, and had made no mention of the Popish Plot. But 'my Lord Lieutenant was overruled by the council, who would not hear of him coming in'. Redmond and his brother Leighlin were to be proclaimed, with rewards of £200 and £100 on their respective

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<sup>1118</sup> John Vesey to Ormond, 17 Dec. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 526).

<sup>1119</sup> Henry Jones to Francis and Deborah Annesley, 2 Nov. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 473-4). This episode is discussed in J.P. Prendergast, *Ireland from the Restoration to the Revolution, 1660 to 1690* (London, 1887), pp 112-22.

<sup>1120</sup> Annesley to 'Latham' (sic), 9 Dec. 1680 (Bodl., Carte MS 39, f. 231).

<sup>1121</sup> Hans Hamilton to Ormond, 18 Dec. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 530-1).

heads.<sup>1122</sup> The second letter, dated 9 December, was the more crucial of the two. Francis Annesley assured Mrs O'Hanlon that 'a pardon had certainly been obtained for them if in so enormous a case it could have been done without violence to justice'. As the pardon was not forthcoming, there was another possibility: O'Hanlon and his two brothers would be assured of pardons if he 'will be a discoverer of the design for the French invasion here, and who in Ireland are the principal abettors': again, Henry Jones was prepared to act as an intermediary to obtain these.<sup>1123</sup>

In December 1680 Sir John Davys assured Ormond that any proceedings against him by his enemies would be dependent on both circumstances and insinuations, for there was no hard evidence against him: the best that could be mustered was an allegation of tardiness in issuing warrants for the arrest of Patrick Lavallyan. But 'all worthy and honest persons I meet with do speak with great honour of your Grace's person, and with great certainty of your Grace's loyalty to the King and sincerity to the Protestant religion and look upon both to be abundantly safe under your Grace's administration.'<sup>1124</sup> On a similar theme, and at the same time, it had transpired that John Odell in Limerick had, in order to deflect accusations of suborning witnesses, obtained additional information 'which seem to corroborate Mr. David Fitzgerald's first information and to make good David Nash his information in spite of his and Lyne's retractions and criminations', though given the suspicious similarity between Fitzgerald's and Nash's allegations, as previously noted by Odell, this was hardly surprising. Odell himself had taken these new depositions in the company of two fellow J.P.'s to ensure a degree of impartiality; they had not been solicited. The witnesses in question seem to have been Murtagh Downey and Maurice Fitzgerald; their evidence was to be sent to Sunderland, and those they had accused were to be arrested.

The parlous condition of Irish finances was illustrated by the fact that, if those now accused were to be arrested and sent to England, Ormond intended to remind Charles of a previous suggestion that the Irish government only pay to send them as far as Chester: it was too great a drain on the revenue to send them to London.<sup>1125</sup> Finance – or the lack of it – remained a critical problem for the Irish administration. The significance attached by some to the comet seen in late 1680 as a bad omen for Dublin's Protestants

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<sup>1122</sup> Deborah Annesley to Mrs. Katherine O'Hanlon, 7 Dec. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 535).

<sup>1123</sup> Francis Annesley to Mrs. Katherine O'Hanlon, 9 Dec. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 536).

<sup>1124</sup> Sir John Davys to Ormond, 18 Dec. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 526-7).

<sup>1125</sup> Ormond to Arran, 18 Dec. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 533).

may have been heightened by the reality that Dublin's defences were seen to be in a poor condition. According to Dublin Corporation, the increase in the size of the city beyond the walls since the Restoration

renders it of no strength nor security to the inhabitants, and which was not only a discouragement to Protestants for settling here, but might be also an invitation to the enemies of his Majesty to invade or raise rebellion in that kingdom...the growth and strength of this city would be the security of the whole kingdom.<sup>1126</sup>

Ormond would be prevailed upon to rectify this. However, financial problems of this nature had been outstanding since he assumed his post as viceroy, and at this time there were more pressing concerns. Writing to Arran, he yet again sought to refute what seemed to be suggestions that his manoeuvring over Peter Walsh's remonstrance in 1661 was actually intended to favour Catholics: the opposite was the case, he argued, pointing out that it was intended to foment division amongst the Catholic clergy, efforts that would have succeeded had not some of his successors – presumably Essex - been 'too indulgent to the whole body of Papists'. In his defence he directed Arran to 'a great book set forth by Peter Walsh' (which he admitted that he had not read).<sup>1127</sup> Ormond also dismissed the allegations of misconduct over his dealing with the issue of Lavallyan. He noted the activities of Owen Murphy, as previously reported by Hans Hamilton, who despite being authorised to find witnesses against Plunkett (presumably in Armagh), had ended up in Tipperary, and had apprehended 'about a dozen people, not like to say anything material as to Plunkett; so that I believe he takes them upon account of Eustace Comyn's mad narrative'.<sup>1128</sup> There was perhaps a related note of desperation evident when Comyn himself asked a correspondent in Cashel for proof that he had been refused a warrant to apprehend Catholic clerics, including Brennan and Plunkett. If found, it was to be sent to Shaftesbury's address in London: a significant indication of his patronage of the witnesses.<sup>1129</sup> But equally, there was a note of exasperation evident when Ormond was told that he was to be accused of taking communion at the home of his sister, Lady Clancarty. He caustically recalled Oates's original allegations in 1678: he was supposed to be killed by Catholics, after all, which

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<sup>1126</sup> c. 25 Dec. 1681 (*Calendar of Ancient Records of Dublin*, v, pp 201-3).

<sup>1127</sup> Presumably a reference to Peter Walsh, *The history and vindication of the loyal formulary, or Irish remonstrance* (London, 1674).

<sup>1128</sup> Ormond to Arran, 29 Dec. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 538-40).

<sup>1129</sup> Eustace Comyn to Richard Denison, 1 Jan. 1681 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 541).



could be seen as proof that he was guilty of no Catholic plot.<sup>1130</sup> However, such persuasive logic counted for little.

Further allegations of plots came from Mullingar, where James Geogheghan claimed to have heard of, and been induced to join, a plot to kill the king. He alleged that the previous summer, in England, he had been told to expect 'a Romish King, and that this heretical king Charles II should be brought down'. There was supposedly an ongoing plot to ensure precisely this outcome, both in Ireland and abroad, for 'God almighty swallowed the heretics of England, for abusing the Catholics'.<sup>1131</sup> But Ormond and the Irish council had problems with Geogheghan: there had been consistent complaints about his abuse of the authority he had received to obtain evidence: 'it was not fit to let him go on to plunder, beat, and imprison who he pleased, English and Irish, Papist and Protestant, as his fancy, supported by strong ale and wine, should direct him'.<sup>1132</sup> While a number of individuals whom Geogheghan had named were to be arrested, he himself was in custody at this juncture, and would be executed in 1681 for stealing cattle.<sup>1133</sup> Questions about the calibre of such witnesses could easily be raised in Ireland, given their conduct. However, irrespective of their veracity, the various allegations of an Irish Catholic plot tallied with certain Irish Protestant expectations. Orrery's son Roger Boyle, for example, who had succeeded to his father's title as the second earl, emulated his father when writing to his mother to express his own belief in, and fear of, the ostensibly imminent Catholic plot being executed.<sup>1134</sup>

However, Ormond's own personal concerns began to ease at this time. Arran informed him that he probably would not have been impeached by parliament, as 'none of the sober men will allow of any article of your being either a Papist or in the plot', though it was possible that he may have been censured for a perceived lack of vigour in acting against Catholics, especially on account of his numerous Catholic relatives. Arran had also heard that an Irish parliament might now be set in train, given the expected dissolution of the English one.<sup>1135</sup> Ormond duly informed John Davys that he was probably in the clear, but he was also aware that new (if obscure) allegations of

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<sup>1130</sup> Ormond to Arran, 1 Jan. 1681 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 543-4).

<sup>1131</sup> 'Information of James Geogheghan', 4 Jan. 1681 (Bodl., Carte MS 39 f. 234).

<sup>1132</sup> Ormond to Arran, 29 Dec. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 540); Burke, *Irish priests in the Penal times*, pp 71-3.

<sup>1133</sup> Lord Lieutenant and Council to Sunderland, 8 Jan. 1681 (Bodl., Carte MS 39, ff 238-9); 'News from Ghent', 9 May 1681 (*Nunziatura di Fiandri*, ii, p. 79).

<sup>1134</sup> Orrery to Dowager Countess, 7 Jan. 1681 (*Orrery papers*, p. 240).

<sup>1135</sup> Arran to Ormond, 11 Jan. 1681 (*H.M.C. Ormonde*, new ser., v, pp 550-1).

plots were emerging from Limerick and Galway.<sup>1136</sup> There were also plot allegations of a somewhat different nature. The information of an anonymous spy who had landed in Ireland on 27 September 1679, reporting to the king that whilst in Wexford in May 1680, he had heard that the Cromwellians and the Irish would rise up. One 'Major Dennis' was the ringleader, and maintained a correspondence with Presbyterians in Ulster, 'who are very numerous and greedy for land'. Yet while this correspondent wondered at the continuation of former Cromwellians in the army, he discerned no trace of any Catholic plot; though as reported, further allegations were to come from one 'Dennis' (presumably Bernard Dennis).<sup>1137</sup> Concerns about Presbyterians were not new; they would be reflected in England in the eventual allegations of a 'sham-plot', whereby the Popish Plot itself was depicted as the invention of Presbyterians, though this was essentially a smear against the Whigs.

In January the informer Owen Murphy had claimed that 'Tyrell', the Catholic bishop of Clogher, was willing to swear to the existence of a plot in Ireland in exchange for a protection. Ormond offered one, but Tyrell declined to appear.<sup>1138</sup> The Privy Council had continued to seek Irish witnesses,<sup>1139</sup> but on 20 January, after considering a request by Ormond, they had ordered the prosecution of James Geogheghan due to the 'violences, excesses, debaucheries, and in effect plain robberies committed on Irish and English Protestants and Papists'; he was suspected of doing so 'to cast a blemish upon other substantial discoveries and witnesses'.<sup>1140</sup> Such chicanery might not have been necessary: one correspondent complained to Ormond that he had become the victim of malicious allegations linking him to the supposed plot, and had been 'overreached, and swallowed up, by Waterford whelps', an allegation supposedly prompted by malice derived from obscure business dealings over lands.<sup>1141</sup> The latter assertion was strikingly reminiscent of Sir Thomas Southwell's claim that David Fitzgerald swore against him due to a dispute over rent.

In mid-January, Charles reiterated his order to Ormond to recruit five companies to replace the troops from Dumbarton's regiment that had been sent to

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<sup>1136</sup> Ormond to John Davys, 15 Jan. 1681 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, p. 553).

<sup>1137</sup> Unknown to King, 14/24 Jan. 1681 (*CSPD 1680-81*, pp 133-5); *Protestant (Domestick) Intelligence*, 18 Jan 1681.

<sup>1138</sup> Burke, *Irish priests in the Penal times*, p. 79.

<sup>1139</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 170 (17 Nov 1680); 179 (9 Jan 1681).

<sup>1140</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 198 (20 Jan 1681).

<sup>1141</sup> R. Walsh to Ormond, 18 Jan. 1681 (Bodl., Carte MS 214, ff 8-9).

Tangiers.<sup>1142</sup> He was also to be permitted to proceed with suggested improvements to fortifications and defences in Ireland, and to advise on what more might be required.<sup>1143</sup> More generally, 1,000 barrels of gunpowder were to be bought for the Irish army, 1,000 extra men were to be raised, and the construction of the fort at Kinsale was to be continued (though there were inevitable financial caveats).<sup>1144</sup> Yet such control as Ormond had over his government's finances was progressively being weakened. In February 1681 the English treasury decisively reasserted its control over Irish finances (a development that may have been related to the new found political strength of the court).<sup>1145</sup> But there was no avoiding the problem of Ireland's ramshackle defences. After all, in February a report from Bristol had made mention of 'an alarm at Youghal, as if the French had been on the coast of Ireland'; however, like so much else during the Popish Plot, this seems to have been groundless.<sup>1146</sup> But even the most tenuous allegations could be deemed worthy of investigation: one James Gardner, of 'Monimore' in County Londonderry, claimed that three years previously a number of 'Irish officers' had arrived in Ireland from France, and had unspecified dealing with Captain Conn O'Neill ('whom they paid much respect'). O'Neill was, in turn, associated with one Cormac O'Hagan, who was seemingly indiscreet when drunk. His words 'this informant understood to have some rebellious dark meaning'.<sup>1147</sup> This was supposedly confirmed the following day by John Red, also of Monimore, who claimed that five weeks previously he had overheard a discussion between O'Hagan and various others about unspecified military appointments, and 'they all concluded that Cormac [O'Hagan] should command in chief over all in those parts'. However, this discussion was cut short by the discovery of an eavesdropper.<sup>1148</sup> Both of these allegations derived from little more than loose talk while drunk, yet were still deemed worthy of being presented to the authorities; indeed, they were forwarded to Ormond, who ordered an investigation.<sup>1149</sup>

Ormond had, however, seized upon a concrete and tangible enemy in Ireland, as opposed to uncertain and shadowy opponents, in England: Lord Clare, who had in

<sup>1142</sup> King to Ormond, 18 Jan. 1681 (*CSPD 1680-81*, p. 138).

<sup>1143</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 214 (16 Feb. 1681).

<sup>1144</sup> Order in Council, 16 Feb. 1681 (*CSPD, 1680-81*, pp 171-2).

<sup>1145</sup> Egan, 'Finance and the government of Ireland', ii, p. 118.

<sup>1146</sup> Leoline Jenkins to Ormond, 5 Feb. 1681 (*CSPD 1680-81*, p. 155).

<sup>1147</sup> 'Information of James Gardner', 4 Feb. 1681 (*HMC Rep 7, app*, p. 747).

<sup>1148</sup> 'Information of John Red', 5 Feb. 1681 (*HMC Rep. 7, app*, pp 746-7).

<sup>1149</sup> Ormond to Massareene, 15 Feb. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 583-4).

January expressed his concerns to the viceroy about the Catholics of Ireland.<sup>1150</sup> He had apparently sought to assist Shaftesbury by providing him with information, but Ormond sneeringly castigated him as a 'Papist'. 'It is marvellous to me that there should be a Popish Plot founded upon French assistance (as no man dares doubt but there was) and that his Lordship should have no hand in it'. Ormond suggested that Clare had links to Spain, France, and Titus Oates, 'and came over hither...just when the design was to be put into execution'. He also observed that Clare's lands, near the mouth of the Shannon and close to Limerick, would be the perfect spot for a Catholic invasion (as indeed some of the informers had suggested themselves): Clare was an obvious candidate for a conspirator, whose current claims of zeal for the Protestant religion 'when the plot is discovered and frustrated' were further grounds on which to suspect him.<sup>1151</sup>

However, the defence of Ireland was being considered in London again. Arran had provided a committee appointed by the Privy Council for this purpose with such details about Ireland's defences as he could. It appears that little had changed since Granard had delivered his own report the previous summer; once again, men and material were to be obtained, and paid for out of the Irish government's pocket.<sup>1152</sup> Nor had the continuing rumours in Ireland abated, that Ormond was obliged to dismiss. 'The hottest and most groundless alarms go out of Munster and I have reason to believe they are sent for out of England to fill sheets of printed papers and the peoples heads with fearful apprehensions'.<sup>1153</sup> Despite Ormond's suspicions of Burlington, forces were deployed in Munster during February 1681 due to 'frequent alarms', and arms, ammunitions and salaries were to be provided to the militia there (and this was to be extended throughout the kingdom for as long as was practicable).<sup>1154</sup> Indeed, it would be reported that a castle near Dunmanway had been attacked (presumably by Tories), and that there were continual fears in the locality about the possibility of an Irish rebellion there, though the presence and strength of the militia meant that this was unlikely without some foreign assistance.<sup>1155</sup>

Prior to this, reports were abroad in Ireland that the Irish army was riddled with Catholics, and there were ongoing aspersions cast upon Sir John Davys (who, according to Arran, was 'persecuted chiefly upon your [Ormond's] account'). But

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<sup>1150</sup> Clare to Ormond, 18 Jan. 1681 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 556-7).

<sup>1151</sup> Ormond to Arran, 11 Feb. 1681 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 576-8).

<sup>1152</sup> Arran to Ormond, 15 Feb. 1680 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, v, pp 581-2).

<sup>1153</sup> Ormond to Jenkins, 19 Feb. 1681 (*CSPD 1680-81*, pp 176-7).

<sup>1154</sup> Longford to Jenkins, 26 Feb. 1681 (*CSPD 1680-81*, pp 186-7).

<sup>1155</sup> 'Extract of a letter', 27 Feb. 1681 (*CSPD 1680-81*, p. 188).

Ormond himself remained the subject of hostility and mistrust; the fact that junior Butlers were travelling to France was seen to attract attention.<sup>1156</sup> When Ormond replied to John Skeffington, viscount Massareene, about the testimonies related to Cormac O'Hagan, he ordered that he be examined, and either arrested or summoned to the next assizes. But he downplayed suggestions of the army being full of Catholics, while gently reminding Massareene that, as a privy councillor, he had his own responsibilities 'to govern and command', in order to 'keep the government in safety and the kingdom in peace notwithstanding suggestion and general rumours'.<sup>1157</sup> Again, this could easily be contrasted with more tangible concerns about Presbyterian activity in Ulster, especially in Donegal, where a 'general fast and abstinence from labour' had been declared, supposedly to induce repentance for forgetting the Covenant, 'which cannot imply anything but the renewal thereof'.<sup>1158</sup> The minutes of the Laggan presbytery were sought by the High-Sheriff of Donegal on Ormond's instructions: the book was hidden, and was not found, but four men were examined in Dublin, fined and imprisoned for eight months due to their involvement in this.<sup>1159</sup> At the other end of the country, scare mongering about Catholics in Munster was blamed on Burlington, whom Ormond was critical of, whilst his scepticism about plots was fanned by the examinations now apparently made against Oliver Plunkett; Ormond noted that if the original grand jury had possessed them they would not have delivered a verdict of *ignoramus*, which begged the obvious question of why they had not been produced in the first place. Ormond was also aware of an impending paper war between Anglesey and James Touchet, earl of Castlehaven, in which he would subsequently become embroiled.<sup>1160</sup>

The essential subject matter of this dispute was the events of the 1640s. Castlehaven had published his memoirs in 1680, presumably (at least in part) with the purpose of rebutting allegations about his conduct in the 1640s made in works such as Borlase's history of the rebellion. In mid-1679 Anglesey had sought material for a prospective history of Ireland (with a particular emphasis on the 1640s) that he planned to write.<sup>1161</sup> He had criticised early drafts of Castlehaven's memoirs, but subsequently

<sup>1156</sup> Arran to Ormond, 19 Feb. 1681 (*HMC Rep. 7 app*, p. 743).

<sup>1157</sup> Ormond to Massareene, 15 Feb. 1681 (*HMC Rep. 7, app*, p. 747).

<sup>1158</sup> John Nisbit to Secretary Gascoyne, 22 Feb. 1681 (*CSPD 1680-81*, p. 180).

<sup>1159</sup> Rev. William T. Latimer, 'The minutes of the Presbytery of Laggan', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, ser. v, vol. 9 (1899), pp 407-12.

<sup>1160</sup> Ormond to Arran, 19 Feb. 1681 (*HMC Rep. 7 app*, p. 743).

<sup>1161</sup> Anglesey diary, 4 July 1679 (BL Add MS 18,730, f. 2).

adopted a hostile stance to the work and its contents in public. Castlehaven, on the other hand, certainly believed that this was to emphasize his public zeal during the Popish Plot: Anglesey had been accused of complicity in the plot by the informer John MacNamara, and may have feared being tainted by the fact that Tyrone was his son-in-law. Edmund Borlase weighed in behind Anglesey here. He stoutly rebutted many of Castlehaven's assertions, emphasising instead that 'the conspiracy was so general and there had been such unheard of villainies (not in any age before) committed by the Irish ere his Majesties forces could be embodied to [assert] his power that the infection seems to have polluted the whole kingdom'.<sup>1162</sup> He continued in the same vein, asserting that such atrocities as were committed by British and settler forces in the 1640s were ultimately to be laid at the door of the Irish rebels who had made the first move.<sup>1163</sup> Whilst scathing of Nicholas French's *Bleeding Iphigenia*, Borlase did concede that the redress of loyal Irish Catholics should have gone further than it actually had.<sup>1164</sup> However, the dispute opened out to include Ormond. The treaties he had signed with the Confederate Catholics in 1646 and 1649 were attacked (thus attacking him by implication). Ormond had no desire to respond in public, though as the dispute dragged on he would draft a broader defence of his past conduct, which was inextricable from criticism of his conduct in the present. The proroguing of the Oxford parliament obviated the necessity for this and it was never published, though the dispute would flare up once again in November 1681.<sup>1165</sup> But this dispute was of a part with previous disputations over the 1640s that had recurred since the Restoration, and which sometimes rested upon the same assumptions that underpinned the belief in the existence of an Irish plot.

On 25 February Sir John Fitzgerald petitioned the Privy Council for release from prison in Ireland, where he was imprisoned on charges based on the allegations of Boark, MacNamara, and David Fitzgerald.<sup>1166</sup> His arrest had prompted a panegyric from the poet Daithi O'Bruadair (Fitzgerald was apparently his patron) stating that were Charles

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<sup>1162</sup> BL Sloane MS 1,015, f. 7.

<sup>1163</sup> BL Sloane MS 1,015, f. 8.

<sup>1164</sup> BL Sloane MS 1,015, f. 19.

<sup>1165</sup> The dispute is discussed in Michael Perceval-Maxwell, 'The Anglesey-Ormond-Castlehaven dispute: taking sides about Ireland in England' in Vincent P. Carey & Ute Lotz-Heumann (eds), *Taking sides? Colonial and confessional mentalities in early modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2003), pp 213-30; idem, 'Sir Robert Southwell and the duke of Ormond's reflections on the 1640s' in Michéal Ó Siochrú (ed), *Kingdoms in Crisis: Ireland in the 1640s* (Dublin, 2001), pp 229-47.

<sup>1166</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 224 (25 Feb 1681).

only to look at Fitzgerald's face, he would realise that he could do no wrong. The poem also damned the informers against him.<sup>1167</sup> O'Bruadair may have had a point. Ormond had been informed that MacMoyer, Duffy and Gormley had accused Hetherington of attempting to persuade them 'to swear against the Queen, the Duke [of York] and your Grace'.<sup>1168</sup> Ormond was still preoccupied with Anglesey's memoirs, which had surprised him more than the usual slanders to which he was accustomed: 'the matter is so false and despicable, that it deserves nothing but contempt'. He was especially unhappy at the claims of crypto-Popery that were still being levelled at him based on his supposed conduct since the onset of the plot.<sup>1169</sup>

Despite the evident fears of Irish Protestants, it remains unclear to what extent, if any, they supported the Whig cause as it was formulated in England. There were obvious alliances and alignments (witness the activities of Henry Jones), but there is little evidence of orchestrated political activity on the part of the Protestant interest. A notable exception is the petition of the Clare grand jury that was drawn up in late February, and which had argued that the dissolution of the English parliament 'has encouraged the Papists in Ireland to as great insolence as the sitting of that parliament gave them terror'. It argued that while no parliament sat, no plot could be discovered, and as Catholics were of the opinion that proclamations against them were not to be enforced, magistrates were reluctant to enforce them. Ormond was called on to press for a parliament that could take the appropriate measures against this to 'secure us and our posterity from the apparent danger we are now in'.<sup>1170</sup>

Such petitioning had become a notable feature of English politics in 1679-81, and at this time it was directed towards pressuring Charles into recalling parliament. However, while Viscount Clare himself considered petitioning along English lines, opposition was evident on the part of some Protestants. He recounted this in a letter that, perhaps significantly, was addressed to Essex. Despite such opposition, 'if it were fit some check were given to such Protestants as in these times oppose the sitting of the parliament in England, on which depends wholly our safety'. Clare was willing to assist Shaftesbury by providing him with information on alleged Catholic activity at court in the 1670s; there was at least one tenuous link to the English opposition. Clare remained

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<sup>1167</sup> John C. MacErlean (ed), *Duanaire Dháibhidh Uí Bhruadair : the poems of David O Bruadair* (3 vols, London, 1910-13), ii, pp 218-9.

<sup>1168</sup> Francis Gwyn to Ormond, 26 Feb. 1681 (*HMC Rep. 7, app, p. 744*).

<sup>1169</sup> Ormond to Wyche, 1 Mar. 1681 (NLI MS 803, f. 33); Ormond to Capt. Mathew, 5 Mar. 1681 (*HMC Rep. 7, app, p. 744*).

<sup>1170</sup> 'The humble petition of the Lord Viscount Clare', 1 Mar. 1681 (*HMC Rep. 7, app, p. 744*).

deeply concerned about Catholic intentions in Ireland, and, like William Petty, advocated conversion to the established church as one possible solution. But his fears were by no means parochial: 'in my opinion it concerns the Protestant interest in England to suppress Popery without delay here, as you will have a numerous party against you, when any Popish prince falls out with the crown'.<sup>1171</sup> Yet instead of achieving its stated purpose, Charles's displeasure at the activities of Clare and the grand jury in promoting such a petition, and the aspersions it implicitly cast upon him, subsequently saw him order that Clare be removed from any official post he held in Ireland.<sup>1172</sup> The petition was subsequently published in the Whig press in London.<sup>1173</sup> But Charles's willingness to punish Clare in this manner may have been indicative of the increasing confidence of the monarchy and its adherents as they seemed to weather the political storm, and the English parliament would be dissolved on 28 March 1681

Inevitably, Ormond remained concerned about the condition of the Irish army. He was seemingly intent on reforming it, especially its mounted units, and in order to do so he intended major musters of the available forces in the country. However, the fear of being posted to Tangiers seemed to be a discouragement.<sup>1174</sup> Presbyterians yet again seemed to pose a more real danger than any Catholic plot: on 9 March the Privy Council ordered the suppression of 'unlawful meetings' in Donegal.<sup>1175</sup> Yet from Queens County came further allegations of 'the design that is now in hand which is to subvert the Protestant religion and to advance the Roman Catholic religion'.<sup>1176</sup> Soon after came reports from Youghal of the discovery of a correspondence between the as yet at liberty Patrick Lavallyan ('one of the suspected ruffians who were employed to murder the King'), sent by him from France to his family in Cork.<sup>1177</sup> According to Shannon,

swearing treason against men is now grown so common that many say they dare hardly ask for their debts or distrain for their rents for fear of being sworn into the plot, and it is generally so all the kingdom over to the great disturbances of the subject, Papist and Protestant, to the filling of prisons with inconsiderable wretches and to his Majesty's considerable charge to keep the

<sup>1171</sup> Clare to Essex, 7 Mar. 1681 (*CSPD 1680-81*, pp 201-2).

<sup>1172</sup> Conway to Ormond, 25 Mar. 1681 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, vi pp 1-2).

<sup>1173</sup> *The true Protestant mercury*, 26-30 Mar 1681.

<sup>1174</sup> Ormond to Jenkins, 'St Davids Day' (*CSPD 1680-81*, pp 191-2).

<sup>1175</sup> Order in Council, 9 Mar. 1681 (*CSPD 1680-81*, p. 206).

<sup>1176</sup> 'Information of William [Dongie], 22 Mar. 1680 (Bodl., Carte MS 39, f. 226).

<sup>1177</sup> 'Conspiracy in Ireland', 30 Mar.-2 Apr. 1681 (*HMC Rep. 11, app 2*, pp 273-4).



accusers and the accused from starving, for they are for the most part equally poor, and, which is hardest of all, we dare not deliver the prisons by the trial of those accused without directions from his Majesty for fear of the scandal, which men are so apt to cast on the government and the justice of the kingdom.<sup>1178</sup>

Ormond was still scathing of the informers in the light of what seemed to be their discrediting in London. Writing to Arran from Ireland, he noted that 'Hetherington is known here to be an arch rogue, and Comyn, whilst he was here was esteemed to be something betwixt a fool and a madman'; hence, Comyn was unlikely to have composed his own narrative. Hetherington was the likely culprit.<sup>1179</sup> But official prudence was maintained with regards to Ireland: a royal order in council ordered that all judges 'in commission' were to sit on circuit for the crown during any Popish Plot trials in Ireland; the juries were to be composed of Protestant freeholders, insofar as this was practicable.<sup>1180</sup>

It now seemed that the Irish elements to the Popish Plot were waning, and perennial concerns came to the fore once again. According to Ormond, 'if there follow but a tolerable calm, I suppose the condition this kingdom is in, and that it may be brought into, may be taken into consideration, for most certainly it must be of advantage or prejudice to affairs in the other two'. The final closure of Ranelagh's accounts was the next Irish business in hand, in order to satisfy those left unpaid and to determine the condition of the revenue. An Irish parliament was the logical next step, though in Ormond's view the work to facilitate this had already been done: all that was required would be the decision.<sup>1181</sup> Arran subsequently confirmed to his father that Hetherington had indeed composed Comyn's narrative, but this may well have been an incidental detail when viewed alongside the more substantive matters that finally appeared to be in train once again: the prospective calling of an Irish parliament to settle the outstanding questions of the revenue and Ireland's defences.<sup>1182</sup> Yet there remained the outstanding question of the eventual trial of Oliver Plunkett. Certainly, there was uncertainty as to whether he would actually be tried in England or Ireland, but Arran had concluded by late April 1681 that if tried in London, Plunkett 'is not like

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<sup>1178</sup> Ormond to Jenkins, 31 Mar. 1681 (*CSPD 1680-81*, p. 227).

<sup>1179</sup> Ormond to Arran, 31 Mar. 1681 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, vi, pp 23-4).

<sup>1180</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 256 (6 Apr. 1681).

<sup>1181</sup> Ormond to Arran, 9 Apr. 1681 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, vi, pp 28-9).

<sup>1182</sup> Arran to Ormond, 9 Apr. 1681 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, vi, pp 30-31).

ever to see Ireland again'; there were too many witnesses against him, and they would be readily believed by an English jury.<sup>1183</sup> Plunkett would be condemned. But this would no longer be a matter to be dealt with in Ireland.

Redmond O'Hanlon was also unfinished business. It was later alleged that Shaftesbury had intended to procure a pardon for him in exchange for his swearing against Ormond and other senior figures in Ireland. If true, this may have contributed to Ormond's resolve to deal with O'Hanlon for once and for all. On 4 March 1681 he had authorised William Lucas of Down 'to do his Majesty good service in the apprehending, killing, and destroying of proclaimed rebels and Tories'.<sup>1184</sup> Lucas contacted O'Hanlon's foster brother Art, and in early April offered him a protection in exchange for his assistance.<sup>1185</sup> Following a quarrel with Redmond, Art O'Hanlon took full advantage of his protection and shot Redmond O'Hanlon on 25 April 1681 near Eight Mile Bridge in County Down. O'Hanlon's body was decapitated by the time Lucas arrived, presumably by one of his followers to prevent the head being put on display.<sup>1186</sup> It was found and mounted on a spike above Downpatrick jail while the remainder of his body was displayed in Newry, County Down.

For neither Redmond's limbs nor pate,  
Shall under sordid rubbish lie  
Forgot, but shall be placed on high.<sup>1187</sup>

As with Patrick Fleming beforehand, an end had been put to the negotiation.

Other matters remained. Clare had sought to apologise to Ormond for any suggestion of having cast aspersions on his government, while hoping that 'neither the petition nor the presenters of it may receive any discountenance from your Grace'.<sup>1188</sup> Ormond could subsequently report that the grand jury had retracted the petition, so Lord Clare 'is wholly disowned and abandoned by those he drew into that snare'; an attempt at a similar petition in Limerick had failed, as the county grand jury declined to get involved. Yet while noting these events, Ormond observed the imminent (and

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<sup>1183</sup> Arran to Ormond, 30 Apr. 1681 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, vi, p. 48).

<sup>1184</sup> *Count Hanlan's downfall, or a true and exact account of the killing that arch traitor and Tory Redmon O'Hanlan* (Dublin, 1681), p. 5.

<sup>1185</sup> *Count Hanlan's downfall*, p. 6.

<sup>1186</sup> *Count Hanlan's downfall*, p. 7.

<sup>1187</sup> Cited in Carpenter (ed), *Verse in English from Tudor and Stuart Ireland*, p. 457.

<sup>1188</sup> 'Petition of Viscount Clare', 22 Apr. 1681 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, vi, pp 38-9).

unprecedented in Ireland) inclination of the 'loyal and well affected citizens' of Dublin to send an address to the King thanking him for his declaration of March 1681.<sup>1189</sup>

Yet Ormond himself was still the subject of rumour and insinuation. In May 1681 a pamphlet entitled *Ireland's Sad Lamentation* (printed in London but presumably imported into Ireland) came to official attention in Dublin.<sup>1190</sup> It was written after the dissolution of the English parliament, ostensibly from a 'person of honour' in Dublin to 'his friend in London'. The dissolution of parliament ensured that 'we have little hopes, if at all any, of being secured from that Popish cruelty which most of us have felt in this age'. The particular reason for this was Ormond, who, it was alleged, had embarked on 'a progress over the whole kingdom, to see in what posture the same lay, (for what design I know not) in which journey he was much attended by Popish gentry'.<sup>1191</sup> Despite the discovery of an Irish dimension to the Popish Plot, Ormond and Arran had supposedly done little to deal with it: instead, he was once more accused of protecting Richard Talbot, numerous Catholic priests, and Tyrone, along with intimidating Protestants into silence about the existence of the Irish plot. It did not openly accuse Ormond of involvement in a plot to massacre Protestants, but the insinuation was obvious: 'we want an Essex, a Shaftesbury, that is to say, a good and zealous Protestant that will stand up for us in this time of eminent and scarcely to be avoided danger'. Ormond, by implication, was of a rather different ilk. Such insinuation also applied to Arran, Boyle, and John Fitzpatrick, whose recent conversion to the established church was dismissed, and whose pedigree was reiterated for the sake of readers: 'his father a heinous rebel, and his mother hanged for making candles of Englishmen's grease in the time of the late rebellion'.<sup>1192</sup> But it was condemned by Dublin Corporation as a libel 'most unchristian, false and scandalous', being 'stuffed with most notorious falsities', and having thus declared their faith in Ormond, Arran and Boyle by condemning it, the corporation decided to issue a proclamation to the same effect.<sup>1193</sup>

On 19 May Ormond provided Jenkins with petitions for relief from a number of former officers in Dungan's regiment who, having been disbanded, were 'very

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<sup>1189</sup> Ormond to Arran, 4 May 1681 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, vi, pp 57-8).

<sup>1190</sup> *Ireland's sad lamentation: discovering its present danger, in some remarkable passages which have happened since the discovery of the horrid Popish Plot* (London, 1680/81).

<sup>1191</sup> *Ireland's sad lamentation*, [p. 1].

<sup>1192</sup> *Ireland's sad lamentation*, [p. 2].

<sup>1193</sup> 'Act of Lord Mayor and Corporation of Dublin', 14 May 1681 (*CSPD 1680-81*, p 281); *Calendar of Ancient Records of Dublin*, v, pp 216-7.

necessitous'.<sup>1194</sup> A note of increasing confidence seemed evident in Ormond's dealing with London. He took great interest in Sir John Davys' request for witnesses to be brought over so that his trial might begin, and Ormond openly stated his disbelief in the accusations. He also requested the apprehension of James Morley and John Cooper in England, both whom he described as 'very ill affected men and Nonconformists', and he ended by stating his open disregard for the petition that Clare had attempted to present to him: such support as it may have had in Clare had apparently collapsed to the point where Clare was its only advocate.<sup>1195</sup> This seemed to mirror the turning of the tide in England, where on the same day Arran reported that Hetherington and Bernard Dennis had been arrested; by now even Edmund Murphy had turned against them.<sup>1196</sup> Writing to York soon after, Ormond expressed his belief that the 'Tory' interest was indeed in the ascendant, but that the danger was not completely past. 'The wrack of the crown in the King your father's time is fresh in the memory of many of us; and the rocks and shoals he was lost upon (though they were hid to him) are so very visible to us, that if we avoid them not, we shall perish rather derided than pitied'.<sup>1197</sup> Reports in London in early June now suggested that parliaments would be called in Ireland and Scotland by the beginning of August.<sup>1198</sup> Yet despite such grounds for optimism, in May Ormond and the council ordered Henry Boyle to enforce a proclamation of 20 November 1678 (against unusually large masses) in Cork.<sup>1199</sup>

Even as late as July 1681, rumours of plots continued to emerge. The informer Owen Callaghan and his father-in-law (also Owen) were making such unsubstantiated allegations in Roscommon in July; the presence of the younger Callaghan to testify at the Roscommon assizes had apparently been requested by Ormond, and allegations of a pro-French plot subsequently emerged from Mayo: these allegations were repeated on the judicial circuit.<sup>1200</sup> But such rumours had been, and would remain, common currency in Restoration Ireland, even aside from the impact of the Popish Plot. On 2 July Arran wrote to his father to tell him of the executions of Plunkett and Fitzharris. 'I shall not need to send you Plunkett's speech, for it is verbatim in the newsbooks, and also sold by itself in print. He died as all people say with great resolution and Fitzharris

<sup>1194</sup> Ormond to Jenkins, 19 May 1681 (*CSPD 1680-81*, pp 287-8).

<sup>1195</sup> Ormond to Jenkins, 21 May 1681 (*CSPD 1680-81*, pp 290-91).

<sup>1196</sup> Arran to Ormond, 21 May 1681 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, vi, p. 68).

<sup>1197</sup> Ormond to York, 27 May 1681 (*Carte, Ormond*, v, p. 162).

<sup>1198</sup> *The true Protestant mercury*, 11-15 June 1681.

<sup>1199</sup> Henry Boyle to Dowager Countess, 24 May 1681 (*Orrery papers*, p. 247).

<sup>1200</sup> Owen Callaghan to Owen Callaghan, 17 May 1681 (*CSPD 1680-81*, p. 286); 'Account of Justice John Keating and Edward Herbert', 5 Aug. 1681 (Bodl., *Carte MS 39*, ff 364-5).

very pitifully'. Arran also informed his father of the arrest of Shaftesbury, who, on his committal, apparently 'cursed very much the Irish witnesses, especially MacNamara, Dennis and Haynes (sic), for he guesses those are the persons that swore against him, but I am told there are as many English'.<sup>1201</sup> It seems reasonable to suggest that Shaftesbury was right: these witnesses had been willing to swear to the truth of various allegations, but as it became obvious that circumstances had turned against them they may well have chosen to swear to the actual truth. But this is incidental. Shaftesbury's arrest can be seen to symbolise the end of both the Popish Plot and the subsequent crisis over the succession. The Stuart monarchy had survived intact. Alongside that, the execution of Plunkett also had a symbolic value. His implication in the plot was the most high profile Irish element of the Popish Plot, and his execution was undoubtedly motivated by cynical political necessities. But even before this, the assertions of an Irish plot, and of the impact this had had upon Ireland itself, had gradually been undermined and rendered irrelevant. In this way, Plunkett's execution was an anomaly. But it also symbolised the end of the Irish dimension to the Popish Plot. With these events, the crisis as it had manifested itself in England and Ireland had come to its end. What remained in the aftermath would be little more than loose ends.

When the allegations of Titus Oates had first come to light in August-September 1678, Ormond's government in Dublin had assiduously sought to deal with the possibility that Ireland may have had a significant role to play, and did so promptly. The impact of the plot came against the backdrop of the institutional preoccupations of the government in the late 1670s, and naturally became intertwined with them. If there was going to be a Catholic rebellion in Ireland, then the kingdom would have to be defended, which would require money, which would require a parliament, which in turn required an investigation of Ranelagh's undertaking. The importance of this cannot be underestimated, for Ranelagh had sought to deflect this unwelcome attention by attempting to smear Ormond as a crypto-Catholic. Such factional rumour mongering, as directed at the viceroy and other senior figures in Ireland, was a constant feature of this crisis. But its origins and usefulness were firmly rooted in English politics.

While Ireland came to play a role in the crisis, it was largely as an adjunct to affairs in England. The ongoing attempts to procure evidence in Ireland to prove the existence of an Irish plot were driven by the requirements of the Whig opposition in the

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<sup>1201</sup> Arran to Ormond, 2 July 1681 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, vi, p. 89).

Exclusion Crisis. Ormond and his administration were increasingly sidelined in these matters, being relegated to the level of factotums, obliged to facilitate the supply of such evidence as was sought; they had little control over what was demanded of them. The same was true in institutional terms, as the ongoing attempts to call an Irish parliament were stymied by events in London, and, crucially, control of Ireland's revenue was increasingly reserved to London. Shaftesbury's call to make Ireland a province, and thus subordinate it to English interests, seems inadvertently prescient in hindsight.

Yet one crucial fact remains: no evidence of any Catholic plot emerged in Ireland during the crisis. The Protestant interest retained latent fears and uncertainties about the intentions of the dispossessed Irish Catholics amongst whom they dwelt, while those same dispossessed Catholics retained latent hopes about the reversal of the Restoration settlement that had confirmed their dispossession. But such fears had been evident throughout the Restoration: while they may have been highlighted and accentuated during the Popish Plot, they were nothing new. Figures such as Orrery or Henry Jones, who had connections to the English political scene and who actively sought to promote suggestions that an Irish plot existed, were essentially making bricks without straw: they had little material with which to work, other than perennial fears and concerns. The Catholic Irish remained quiescent, and Ormond himself remained sceptical about the existence of any Catholic plot, not to mention the motivations of those such as Orrery who maintained that such a plot existed. There were indeed internal security problems in Ireland, from Presbyterians on the one hand, and Tories on the other. But Catholic Ireland did not seem inclined to rise, and from the early stages of the plot Ormond had perceived the dangers of acting in a manner that could provoke it, even if this ensured that aspersions would be cast upon him. This was the essence of Sir Robert Southwell's judgement of May 1682.<sup>1202</sup> He appears to have been right. And prior to this, in mid-July 1681 Ormond himself had been confident that Ireland was in no danger of invasion, especially now that Plunkett was dead (despite his scepticism about the existence of such a plot as had been alleged, he had retained some lingering suspicions about the activities of the deceased primate).<sup>1203</sup> And by the end of the month he could report as much to Charles.

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<sup>1202</sup> See p. 4, n. 6 above.

<sup>1203</sup> Ormond to Hans Hamilton, 14 July 1681 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, vi, p. 99).

This kingdom improves visibly, and is improved beyond what could have been reasonably hoped for in the space of twenty years, nor can anything but a civil war, or some other of God's national (sic) judgements stop the course of prosperity it is in, and yet our affluence is not so great as to become our disease. It is true there is no faction in any of your other kingdoms, but hath some abettors and well wishers in this, and I fear even in your service, and amongst those that live or live the better by it, but your Majesty's late conduct in your court, councils and magistracy has evidently and advantageously influenced your affairs here. I presume not to look beyond seas or so far into foreign designs and actions as to prognosticate what dangers they may in time produce to England, my foresight being bounded by a nearer prospect, and that methinks plainly enough shews that you are put to defend and vindicate your Royal authority at home which must be effected before you can employ it abroad with any probability of success. This is a position so manifestly true that I hope God will let your people see it and dispose them to that obedience, which only can preserve them from the slavery they seem to fear and from the confusion their leaders seem to affect. From both God protect your Majesty and your kingdoms.<sup>1204</sup>

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<sup>1204</sup> Ormond to the King, 23 July 1681 (*HMC Ormonde*, ns, vi, pp 104-5).

## Aftermath, 1681-91

In the wake of Plunkett's trial, at least one tract was written to reassert his guilt, and thereby validate the witnesses against him.<sup>1205</sup> Yet by its nature this was a redundant exercise: Plunkett was dead. However, his accusers were not, and the pamphlet could be seen as a defence of their own position in what was likely to prove a vulnerable time for some of them. There would be attempts to suggest an Irish link with the so-called 'sham plot': the circuitous allegations that claimed that part of the Catholic plan in the Popish Plot was to mask it as a form of Presbyterian unrest.<sup>1206</sup> Indeed, William Hetherington published a tract in 1682 refuting the claims that he had manipulated witnesses, and reproducing once again the testimonies of some of the informers with whom he had been involved: he also sought to link these to allegations of a 'sham-plot'.<sup>1207</sup> Hetherington had remained loyal to Shaftesbury, but his fortunes eventually declined with those of his patron: in November 1681 he was arrested on a charge of *scandalum magnatum* brought by Ormond, and was ordered to pay £10,000 damages; his inability to pay saw him imprisoned again, and in March 1682 he was accused of involvement in a plot to assassinate the king. In other words, Hetherington's personal circumstances had changed for the worse: the pamphlet may well have been an attempt to salvage something from his previous activities. But Ireland's role in the Popish Plot as it had unfolded in England had essentially ended with Plunkett's execution. The Irish witnesses and their allegations were of little further value in England, and slowly began to trickle back to Ireland. On 28 July Owen Murphy was reimbursed for his expenses and was permitted to return to Ireland, whilst Eustace Comyn was granted a full pardon on the same day.<sup>1208</sup> Not all were so lucky: on 5 October 1681 Ormond was authorised by the English Privy Council to prosecute anyone who had sought to suborn witnesses to testify against himself, Lord Chancellor Boyle, and Sir John Davys.<sup>1209</sup>

On 19 October 1681 the Privy Council ordered the release of Marcus Forristal, the Catholic bishop of Kildare, who was to have his possessions and money restored to him (if practicable). However, he was not to be charged with involvement in any plot:

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<sup>1205</sup> *The honesty and true zeal of the Kings witnesses justified and vindicated* (London, 1681).

<sup>1206</sup> *Mr. Smyth's discovery of the Popish sham-plot in Ireland* (London, 1681); *News from Ireland, touching the damnable design of the Papists in the Kingdom to forge a sham-plott upon the Presbyterians* (London, 1682).

<sup>1207</sup> [William Hetherington], *The Irish evidence, convicted by their own oaths* (London, 1682).

<sup>1208</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 332 (28 July 1681).

<sup>1209</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 364 (5 Oct 1681).



only with remaining in Ireland beyond the period specified for Catholic clerics by proclamation.<sup>1210</sup> There were, of course, lingering suspicions about the existence of a Catholic plot: in June 1681 Massareene expressed his conviction that ‘I really believe the Popish Plot goes still on with the Romish clergy, who, you see, are still amongst us, yet will neither be taken nor appear’.<sup>1211</sup> But Forristal’s release hardly suggested that he was believed to be involved in a plot to destroy Protestants. Some witnesses remained active: on 21 October 1681 the Privy Council considered the petitions of eight persons, including one Lt Col Richard Stephenson. They had been accused by Murtagh Downey, Maurice Fitzgerald and Owen Callaghan, and petitioned that these three be sent back to Ireland so that their trials could proceed.<sup>1212</sup> On 4 November 1681 the Privy Council ordered that they were to be sent back to Ireland to give evidence ‘upon the petition of divers gentlemen in prison in Ireland’. They were to be entrusted to Ormond, for ‘their evidence would be of no use here’.<sup>1213</sup> John and Dennis MacNamara, Edward Ivy, and Bernard Dennis all testified against Shaftesbury in his trial in late November 1681, though he was acquitted.<sup>1214</sup> On 30 November 1681 the Privy Council granted Bernard Dennis £2 to cover the costs of his return to Ireland.<sup>1215</sup> Tyrone himself was released in December 1681 on condition that he surrender himself if required, and his accusers were to be sent back to Ireland to face prosecution for their crimes.<sup>1216</sup> On 24 January 1682 the Privy Council also reimbursed Maurice Fitzgerald for his eventual return to Ireland.<sup>1217</sup> And some days later John Fitzgerald alleged that Israel Tonge had arranged to plant the letters in the wall that he had been supposed to uncover in 1680.<sup>1218</sup> Whether true or not, Fitzgerald had readily undermined his own allegations.

On 8 February 1682 the Privy Council ordered that information on the Popish Plot in Ireland, provided by James Fitzpatrick of Quin, Clare, was to be given to the magistrate Edmund Warcup, who was to ensure that certain named individuals be

<sup>1210</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 374 (19 Oct 1681); Tanari to Secretariate of State, 17 Oct. 1681 (*Nunziatura di Fiandra*, ii, p. 88); same to same, 3 Apr. 1682 (*Nunziatura di Fiandra*, ii, p. 89).

<sup>1211</sup> Massareene to Rawdon, 1 June 1681 (*Rawdon papers*, pp 267-9).

<sup>1212</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 377 (21 Oct. 1681). Those accused were: Lt. Col. Richard Stephenson, Oliver Stephenson, John MacNamara, Daniel MacNamara, John Boark, Capt John Purdon, William Boarke, and John Power.

<sup>1213</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 387 (4 Nov. 1681).

<sup>1214</sup> Haley, *Shaftesbury*, p. 679.

<sup>1215</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 412 (30 Nov. 1681).

<sup>1216</sup> ‘News from Brussels’, 5 Dec. 1681 (*Nunziatura di Fiandra*, ii, p. 88).

<sup>1217</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 443 (24 Jan. 1682).

<sup>1218</sup> ‘Account of John Fitzgerald’, 30 Jan. 1682 (*CSPD, 1682*, pp 46-7).

sought in London.<sup>1219</sup> Five days later, on 13 February, Warcup reported back. Nobody had been found.<sup>1220</sup> Given the collapse of the allegations about the Irish plot, this was unsurprising.

In May 1682 three of Plunkett's (unnamed) accusers were condemned to death in Ireland, though one retracted his accusations against the Primate.<sup>1221</sup> By August 1682 Edmund Murphy was reportedly working on a farm in Kent, and he vanished from the record soon afterwards. And by October 1682 Richard Creagh, the bishop of Cork, was declared innocent after one of his two accusers recanted.<sup>1222</sup> The Catholic bishops who were supposedly instrumental in the Irish plot as it was promoted were thereby released. Perhaps the most eloquent (if ultimately ironic) statement about the continued existence of any Irish plot was the decision by the Privy Council, on 28 February 1683, and on foot of his own petition, to permit Richard Talbot to return to Ireland.<sup>1223</sup>

However, the travails of the witnesses who had been central to the allegations of the Irish plot were incidental. There were more important considerations. In April 1682 Dublin Corporation offered a petition of loyalty to both Ormond and the King.<sup>1224</sup> Indeed, throughout 1682-3 similar petitions were drawn up throughout Ireland. Tim Harris has suggested that such Irish petitions corresponded to the English petitions issued during the so-called 'Tory revenge', as the king and court sought to consolidate their position across the three kingdoms whilst avenging themselves upon their opponents.<sup>1225</sup> While some disaffection seemed evident in Ireland, the majority of such petitions assured Charles of the support of his loyal Protestant subjects. It remains virtually impossible to gauge whether the English political divisions of 1679-81 were replicated in Ireland: the absence of an Irish parliament ensured that there was no institutional forum in which such beliefs could find expression. But, as in England and Scotland, by the final years of Charles II's reign the danger to the Stuart dynasty in Ireland was seen to have passed, and the succession had been secured.

Ormond's tenure as viceroy ended in February 1685 with the death of Charles II. He was subsequently lauded in an anonymous broadside for his steady and

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<sup>1219</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 449 (8 Feb. 1682).

<sup>1220</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 463 (13 Feb. 1682).

<sup>1221</sup> 'News from Brussels', 15 May 1682 (*Nunziatura di Fiandra*, ii, pp 89-90).

<sup>1222</sup> Tanari to Secretariate of State, 9 Oct 1682 (*Nunziatura di Fiandra*, ii, p. 91).

<sup>1223</sup> PRO PC 2/69, 641 (28 Feb. 1683).

<sup>1224</sup> 8 Apr. 1682 (*Calendar of ancient records of Dublin*, v, pp 232-4).

<sup>1225</sup> The petitioning campaign is discussed in Harris, *Restoration*, pp 390-95.

composed service during the crisis, in terms reminiscent of Southwell's previous assessment of his tenure.

Into your hands, then, which before it graced,  
The noble instrument again was placed;  
On which, a long, soft tune, again you played,  
When jarring discord did all else invade.<sup>1226</sup>

The Popish Plot carried an occasional resonance in subsequent years. Yet the fortunes of those accused were mixed: Brittas was earmarked for a command in January 1686, 'having been perfectly ruined by Mr Oates's plot', and Piers Lacy had also been impoverished by two years imprisonment: he petitioned Clarendon for assistance in January 1686, who recommended his petition for consideration given 'how much he suffered in the time of Oates's villainy'.<sup>1227</sup>

However, there was a greater resonance accorded to the specific concerns that the Popish Plot had highlighted in Ireland, and which had not yet been satisfactorily resolved. In the early 1680s William Petty once again turned his attentions to the condition of Ireland in general, and its defences in particular.

Suppose the ports and garrisons of Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, Youghal, Cork, Kinsale, Dingle, Tralee, Limerick, Galway, Sligo, Derry, Carrickfergus and Drogheda to be in the hands of Catholic officers, under one Catholic general, who commands perhaps 15 garrisons and 15 regiments; it is manifest that the said general and 30 officers can if they agree let in the French.

It followed, then, that the Catholic Irish

would triumph in full splendour of religion, the protection of the mightiest prince, the exercise of all offices, the merit of extirpating heresy, and revenge even by massacre upon the British and Protestant interest, and to be delivered from the fear of a Protestant successor.<sup>1228</sup>

In this context, the invocation of a Catholic Irish 'massacre' by way of revenge was deeply suggestive. The passing of the Popish Plot did not alter the reality that Ireland was seen to be vulnerable to foreign attack. Catholic France was the enemy without;

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<sup>1226</sup> Cited in Carpenter (ed), *Verse in English from Tudor and Stuart Ireland*, p. 494.

<sup>1227</sup> S. W. Singer (ed.). *The correspondence of Henry Hyde, earl of Clarendon* (2 vols, London, 1828). i, pp 207, 208-9.

<sup>1228</sup> BL Add MS 72,881, ff 23-26.

Catholic Ireland the enemy within. And such concerns as were expressed by Petty, of internal subversion assisting a Catholic invasion, were reminiscent in themselves of the allegations made during the plot by informers such as David Fitzgerald.

Fears of French assistance to the Catholic Irish did not abate after 1681. In 1688 an assessment of the condition of Ireland was provided to William of Orange prior to his expedition there. The Irish in 1688 were seen to be a far more formidable enemy than they had been in 1641, given that they now possessed advantages that they had lacked at that time: numerical, strategic and geographical supremacy, military strength, major support from a continental power, and royal authority, for James was still king of Ireland. Yet despite lacking these advantages in the 1640s, they had still formed a government and held out for twelve years: they were dangerous in themselves, and now

they have the Kings authority added to the fury of their priests. They have interests and councils of France to abet them, and the Kings authority will be now so much at the mercy of France, that in effect the King of France will be now King of Ireland. Nor will a Popes Nuncio be long wanting thence, to unite the minds of the clergy in this war of religion.<sup>1229</sup>

To any observer in 1641-53, or 1678-81, such an assessment could only have sounded familiar. Familiar too was the printed rhetoric of the Williamite war, and of the ghosts it sought to conjure. The 1680s retained an undercurrent of unease facilitated by uncertainty about the present, and certainty about the past. One chief secretary had noted how 'the Irish talk of nothing now but recovering their lands and bringing the English under their subjection, which they who have been the masters for above 400 years know not how well to bear'.<sup>1230</sup> Ireland itself retained a large and disgruntled Catholic majority, who resented the injustice of their dispossession at the hands of a small and wary Protestant interest. When Nicholas French's *Narrative of the Earl of Clarendon's settlement and sale of Ireland*, was reprinted in 1685, and 'English Protestant' offered a riposte: its subject matter remained relevant and contentious.<sup>1231</sup> After all, the legitimacy of the Restoration settlement was at stake. Unsurprisingly, given the Catholic revival of the 1680s (especially the danger to the land settlement posed by the 1689 Jacobite parliament), and the stark fact that French forces were in Ireland supporting a Catholic monarch, the Williamite war triggered an outburst of

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<sup>1229</sup> Royal Irish Academy, MS 24. G. 2, f. 1.

<sup>1230</sup> Patrick Melvin (ed), 'Sir Paul Rycout's memoranda and letters from Ireland, 1686-1687', *Analecta Hibernica* 27 (1972), pp 156-8.

<sup>1231</sup> *Calendar of Clarendon State papers*, v, p. 657.

printed material similar in tone to that employed in previous generations. Arguably, the Popish Plot in Ireland could be seen to be on the verge of coming true.

York succeeded his brother Charles as James II in 1685, and Irish support for him inevitably meant Catholic support. One could easily discern the framework of the long-promised Catholic plot, of which 1641 had merely been one episode.<sup>1232</sup> Catholic confidence under the Jacobite regime was illustrated in 1686 by events in Galway. During the Popish Plot Catholics had been expelled from the city, and were barred from participation in its governance, but in June 1686, on the orders of the viceroy Henry Hyde, earl of Clarendon, Catholic merchants in Galway (and other towns) were to be admitted as freemen without taking the oath of supremacy. If elected to office, their names were to be forwarded to Clarendon to facilitate their formal dispensation from the oath, if appropriate. The reasoning behind this echoed issues that had arisen during the Popish Plot itself: Catholics were useful to the local economy, and there was no legal basis for their exclusion from the freedom of corporate towns.<sup>1233</sup> In July 1686 Clarendon, on foot of a petition from Galway's Catholics blaming the mayor, Theodore Russell, for the misuse of funds, ordered him not to stand for the post again, and not to delay the admission of Catholics to the common council: indeed, he was expressly ordered to admit them promptly.<sup>1234</sup> On the other hand, William King later claimed that Catholics had not forgotten other aspects of the Popish Plot: they had supposedly sought to take advantage of the fact that James had, apparently, never issued a general pardon on his accession. 'No sooner had they got judges and juries that would believe them, but they began a trade of swearing, and ripping up what they had pretended their neighbours had said of his late majesty whilst duke of York some years before, especially in time of the Popish Plot'. Consequently, malicious prosecutions proliferated.<sup>1235</sup>

Yet even prior to the outbreak of war in 1689, the outrage of Irish Protestants at their prospective fate was noted, as was their willingness to defend themselves: the deaths of Essex and, significantly, Edmund Bury Godfrey were invoked as reminders of

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<sup>1232</sup> *A true discovery of the private league, between the late King James (since his coming from Ireland) and the K. of France: shewing their design to destroy all the Protestants in Europe* (London, 1690), np.

<sup>1233</sup> Edward MacLysaght (ed), 'Report on documents relating to the wardenship of Galway', *Analecta Hibernica*, 14 (1944), pp 149-50.

<sup>1234</sup> MacLysaght, (ed), 'Report on documents relating to the wardenship of Galway', pp 150-51.

<sup>1235</sup> William King, *The state of the Protestants in Ireland under the late King James's government* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., London, 1692), p. 100.

the perfidy of the Papists.<sup>1236</sup> Naturally, James would be vilified in Protestant considerations during the war itself. For one observer, Ireland had long overcome 'that great devastation caused by that tedious and bloody rebellion begun in the year '41' to attain a level of prosperity and happiness, 'for all affairs were managed with the same equality and indifference towards all manner of persons; so that the very Papists could not complain of an unequal distribution of justice.'<sup>1237</sup> The depoliticised nature of such an idyllic scene ensured that when 'malicious and prying Popish neighbours', who had been encouraged by policies favouring Catholics, began 'without doubt, to think of some such bloody practices as were put in execution in the year forty-one', and seek to emulate them, it could be readily taken as an integral element of their nature and proclivities.<sup>1238</sup>

Yet in an ironic reiteration of Ormond's analysis of ten years previously, the danger was not necessarily from the Irish in themselves: 'tis certain, that the Irish never had power to hurt the English and Protestants of that kingdom, but for the advantage they had of a Popish king who divested the Protestants of all power, civil and military' and placing it instead 'into the hands of Irish papists.'<sup>1239</sup> Another account of James' alleged conduct assured readers that the author would not 'enter into a tedious discourse of all the measures taken since 1660 to subvert the Protestant religion'; to the right audience it would be unnecessary.<sup>1240</sup> Indeed, the complaints about the methods used to undermine Protestant power – purges of the civil and military establishments, and the consequent transfer of control to Catholic hands – are fundamentally similar to the 1649 declaration against the Ormond peace cited above,<sup>1241</sup> and to the claims of some of the informers during the Popish Plot; continuity once more. The form of the danger was again discernible, but the enemy was now within: James had opened the centre of power to Catholic influence. This did not, strictly speaking, require the assistance of the clergy, for by this time the viceroy was Richard Talbot, now earl of Tyrconnell, the same Catholic spokesman accused of complicity in the Popish Plot. Tyrconnell may have been markedly more enthusiastic for redressing Irish Catholic

<sup>1236</sup> *Calendar of Clarendon State papers*, v, p. 688.

<sup>1237</sup> *A short view of the methods made use of in Ireland for the subversion and destruction of the Protestant religion and interest in that kingdom* (London, 1689), p. 2.

<sup>1238</sup> *A short view of the methods made use of in Ireland for the subversion and destruction of the Protestant religion and interest in that kingdom*, p. 11.

<sup>1239</sup> *Reasons for his Majesties issuing a general pardon to the rebels of Ireland* (London, 1689), np.

<sup>1240</sup> *A true representation to the king and people of England; how matters were carried on all along in Ireland by the late King James* (London, 1689), A2.

<sup>1241</sup> See p. 118, n. 569 above.

grievances than his master. He had a window of opportunity in which to fulfil his objectives: the disarming of Protestants and arming of Catholics, the removal of Protestants from civil and military positions and their replacement with Catholics, and the modification (or even reversal) of the land settlement in favour of Catholics.<sup>1242</sup> Tyrconnell's subsequent activities as viceroy were not automatically coterminous with James's wishes as king. Certainly, Irish Protestants had been willing to welcome his accession (though admittedly they had no choice in the matter) with celebration and loyal addresses. Even after the accession of William, Protestant petitions were often directed towards James; the last declaration for William in the Stuart kingdoms was from Ireland. Admittedly, there may have been attempts on the part of Irish Protestants to hedge their bets with regards to the king. But the implications of Tyrconnell's policies – especially the possibility of a reversal of the land settlement – proved decisive in ensuring their gravitation towards William. The incidence of violence directed towards Protestants also raised fears of a repeat of 1641.<sup>1243</sup> Indeed, some pamphleteers attempted to draw a distinction between the two, 'as the late King coming for Ireland...gave us some hopes, it would abate the cruelty of the enraged Tyrconnell'.<sup>1244</sup> But in rhetorical terms the distinction was irrelevant.

As reported, Tyrconnell's actions sounded familiar; the attempted destruction of the Protestant community in Ireland.<sup>1245</sup> The involvement of Catholic clergy and the French was discerned once more.<sup>1246</sup> And again, the spectre of 1641 remained near to hand: 'a day never to be forgot'.<sup>1247</sup> The current assault upon Protestants by Tyrconnell and his forces 'so nearly resemble their beginnings in their last so horrid rebellion in forty one'.<sup>1248</sup> For the more imaginative pamphleteers putting words into Tyrconnell's mouth, the point could be emphasised with hopefully greater veracity, and in doing so

<sup>1242</sup> John Miller, 'The Earl of Tyrconnell and James II's Irish policy', *Historical Journal*, 20 (1977), pp 803-23.

<sup>1243</sup> Raymond Gillespie, 'The Irish Protestants and James II, 1688-90', *Irish Historical Studies*, 38 (1992), pp 124-33.

<sup>1244</sup> *An account of the present, miserable state of affairs in Ireland* (London ?, 1689), np.

<sup>1245</sup> *A letter from a gentleman in Ireland to his friend in London, upon occasion of a pamphlet entitled a vindication of the present government of Ireland...under Tyrconnel* (Dublin, 1688), np; *An account of a late, horrid and bloody massacre in Ireland...procured and carry'd on by the L. Tyrconnell* (London ?, 1689); *The present dangerous conditions of the Protestants in Ireland* (London, 1689); *The sad estate and condition of Ireland* (London, 1689); *The sad and lamentable condition of the Protestants in Ireland* (London, 1689).

<sup>1246</sup> *A confession of faith of the Roman Catholics of Ireland* (London, 1689); *Tyrconnel's letter to the French king from Ireland* (London, 1690).

<sup>1247</sup> *Dublin Intelligence*, 21-8 October 1690.

<sup>1248</sup> *An account of the late barbarous proceedings of the Earl of Tyrconnel* (London, 1689); *A brief and modest representation of the present state & condition of Ireland* (London, 1689).

collapsed any distinctions between himself and his royal masters, most especially his Catholic queen: 'It was but in the year 1641 200,000 heretics fell victims to the holy cause, in this island; and were I master of as many islands, they should all be offered up a tribute to your majesties shrine'.<sup>1249</sup> Recurring themes were present; unprovoked slaughter, the connivance of Catholic priests, foreign invasion and perhaps most dangerously, subversion at the heart of power. It was from such perennial fears, now transformed into evident reality that Irish Protestants sought to secure themselves. The soliciting of English support, as in the 1640s, was an obvious way out of a dilemma that presented them with the possibility of destruction. But to do so after the event would be too late, and the precedent that came to hand was the obvious solution: the events of 1689-91, as discerned in the chaos of war (the presence of Catholic forces, a Catholic revival, and a possible reversal of the land settlement) suggested confirmation of what had been feared since 1641. This was by no means far-fetched. According to William King, writing after the war,

If they hated us so much in 1641, that without provocation, and whilst in possession of their estates, they rose as one man, and attempted to destroy us; if they were so set on it, that they ventured to do it without arms, discipline, or authority on their side, and where the hazard was so great, that it was ten to one if they succeeded; what could we expect they would do now, when provoked to the height by the loss of their estates, when armed, disciplined, and entrusted with the places of strength, power and profit in the kingdom? This alone is a demonstration that the king, who thus put us in the power of our inveterate and exasperated enemies, either was extremely mistaken in his measures, or designed our destruction.<sup>1250</sup>

The same things had also been feared during the Popish Plot. The Williamite invasion had in itself little to do with the plight of Irish Protestants, but as the Jacobite cause was defeated in Ireland, the island's Protestant community sought to transfer its allegiance to a new king, and thereby preserve themselves. The legislative victory extracted by that community in the 1690s to secure itself proved a durable one, but the memory from which it drew purpose never passed out of history.

However, Protestant memories were not the only memories, and after the Jacobite defeat in 1691 Catholic Irish minds devoted time to their version of the past. York had succeeded to the throne as James II, and the Gaelic Irish, who had suffered in

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<sup>1249</sup> *A letter from Monsieur Tyrconnel...to the late Queen* (London, 1690), p. 4.

<sup>1250</sup> William King, *The State of the Protestants in Ireland under the late King James government* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., London, 1692), p. 22.



spite of their loyalty, had expected his accession to the throne to usher in the restoration of their religion and estates.<sup>1251</sup> It was no surprise then that 1678, the year in which the Popish Plot had first come to light, could be perceived by the Old English author of 'A light to the blind' as 'the famous year, wherein the monumental troubles of his Royal Highness began'.<sup>1252</sup> The opposition to the succession in 1678 was seen to stem from a fear of Catholics, and from this had stemmed the numerous plots, in which Titus Oates and his 'contradictory, and improbable' tale had been but one actor, and which had been intended to destroy Catholicism in the three kingdoms and to disinherit the rightful king, for 'it made the nations tremble, and struck a terror into the King himself'.<sup>1253</sup> The rule of James in England had attracted odium for its authoritarian nature, but the disloyalty of Protestants was therefore proof that they needed to be ruled with a strong hand. And that disloyalty had become evident during the exclusion campaign, depicted as the first rebellion in the sequence of rebellions – Argyll, Monmouth - that had its final success in the Glorious Revolution. For the anonymous author, the continuity between 1678 and 1688 was obvious.<sup>1254</sup>

In England the Irish dimension to the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis had highlighted the potency of fears of the Catholic Irish that, over time, had assumed the role of ingrained and automatic assumption. The Catholic Irish had been seen to pose a threat to Protestant England in the 1640s,<sup>1255</sup> again during the Popish Plot, and would be seen to do so once again on the eve of the Glorious Revolution.<sup>1256</sup>

In Irish terms, the Popish Plot exposed the latent fears of the Protestant interest. But the lack of major unrest in Ireland during the crisis strongly suggested that these fears were simply standard. However, their enduring fears of the Catholic Irish in Ireland, as reflected through the lens of 1641, ensured that when the same fears seemed to be on the brink of realisation after 1685, the response of the Protestant interest had

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<sup>1251</sup> O'Kelly, *Macariae Excidium*, pp 13-5.

<sup>1252</sup> NLI MS 476, 'A light to the blind', f 275.

<sup>1253</sup> NLI MS 476, 'A light to the blind', f. 277

<sup>1254</sup> NLI MS 476, 'A light to the blind', ff. 282-83. Patrick Kelly, 'A light to the blind': the voice of the dispossessed elite in the generation after the defeat at Limerick', *Irish Historical Studies*, 24 (1985), p. 448.

<sup>1255</sup> Lindley, 'The impact of the 1641 rebellion upon England and Wales', *passim*; Shagan, 'Constructing discord', *passim*; O'Hara, 'English newsbooks and the outbreak of the Irish rebellion of 1641', *passim*.

<sup>1256</sup> G.H. Jones, 'The Irish fright of 1688: real violence and imagined massacre', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 55 (1982), pp 148-53.

enormous consequences for the subsequent history of Ireland. By its nature, the Popish Plot in Ireland had been a prelude.

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