

ARTHUR MAYNWARING? (1668-1712), WRITER AND POLITICIAN. Maynwaring was a politician, literary patron, and author of political satires, the earliest of which was in support of the Tories, but after 1689 he was won over to the Whig cause. It was only, however, around 1704, when Sarah Churchill, duchess of Marlborough became his friend and supporter, that he began writing a sustained series of attacks on the Tories; there are more than two hundred letters surviving that show his role as her confidante and (finally) her official secretary. Maynwaring used his influence with Sarah to encourage her attempts to persuade her long-time friend and patron, Queen Anne (reigned, 1702-1714) to a more Whig-friendly policy. He was also instrumental in persuading Sarah to retain her offices in the Queen's household in the face of Sarah's increasingly fraught relationship with the Queen, a relationship that his advice did nothing to ameliorate; Sarah was finally forced out at the end of 1710.

Gregg believes Maynwaring's influence over Sarah was finally to her detriment, as he encouraged her passionate and often unreasoning responses to what she perceived as the Queen's stubborn recalcitrance in matters of policy (*Queen* 272). In the same year (1710), Anne's decision to dismiss many Whigs from their government posts led to Maynwaring's most determined propaganda efforts, as he attacked the Tories and their leader Robert Harley, and defended the Whigs, particularly the policies of Godolphin and John Churchill, duke of Marlborough, Sarah's husband. His tracts were so successful that in 1711 the government set out to prosecute opposition publishers for sedition, clearly with the main aim of silencing Maynwaring. Before his death in 1712, however, Maynwaring used his remaining influence to win passes that permitted Sarah and her husband to leave England. His unfinished draft biography of the duke of Marlborough was completed and published by Richard Steele in 1714.

QUEEN ANNE (1665-1714), QUEEN OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND and SARAH CHURCHILL, DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH (1660-1744). Born the younger of the two daughters of James, duke of York, Anne was a supporter of the revolution of 1688, cooperating in the supplanting of her father, James II. After Anne's elder sister Mary and husband William of Orange became joint monarchs, Anne increasingly relied on the support of long-time friend Sarah Churchill and her husband John. Faithful and politically-astute, Sarah helped Anne wrangle a £50,000 annual pension from Parliament, and financial independence from the new monarchs. Outraged by Mary and William's subsequent banishment of the Churchills from court, Anne and her household withdrew from their court quarters, creating a permanent rift between Anne and Mary. Ascending the throne in 1702, Anne showered the Churchills with important offices; Sarah became groom of the stole, mistress of the robes, and keeper of the privy purse; husband and wife became duke and duchess of Marlborough. Anne and Sarah's warm friendship, however, quickly disintegrated: Sarah, a supporter of the Whig political party and an enemy to the Tories, unsuccessfully harassed Anne to deviate from her moderate policy of including both parties in her government. In increasingly embittered attacks, Sarah accused the Queen of loving flattery (since she rejected the plain truths Sarah had to tell); of being ungrateful to a long-time servant; of conspiring to supplant her with her cousin, Abigail Masham [née Hill] (1670?-1734); and of engaging in sexual relations with Masham. Although Anne attempted several rapprochements, largely because of the importance of John Churchill, duke of Marlborough, to her foreign policy, this final charge meant the end of her relationship with Sarah. Anne did not manage to remove Sarah from her court offices until 1710, the year Sarah threatened to blackmail the queen by publishing the letters Anne had written to her, refusing the Queen's request to return them to their author.

## MAYNWARING AND THE AUTHORSHIP OF "A NEW BALLAD" AND "THE RIVAL DUCHESS"

Sarah and Anne's falling-out of 1708 was largely over the increasing influence of and favour shown to Abigail Masham, one of Anne's chamber-maids and Sarah's cousin, whom Sarah had (ironically enough) introduced into Anne's household. Maynwarding wrote to Sarah to recommend ridicule as a method of dealing with the Queen: "A good ridicule has often gone a good way in doing a business; and this I am sure is of such a kind, that it needs only to be mentioned to make it ridiculous (*Queen* 273). "A New Ballad," which Sarah showed to the Queen in person at court, and 'The Rival Duchess' may constitute the public ridicule which Maynwarding believed would bring the Queen to heel. Although these works appeared anonymously, Gregg believes Maynwarding the author of both, although the issue is not addressed by Maynwarding's DNB biographer, Henry Snyder. What is certain is that Sarah's presentation of these works to the Queen and her subsequent letter of 26 July 1708, all of which accuse Anne of a sexual relationship with Abigail, spelled the final end of Sarah and Anne's relationship. Their early letters suggest that their friendship was very close and on Anne's part there was a passionate devotion to the well-being of her friend.

From A NEW BALLAD (1708)

*To the tune of 'Fair Rosamond.'*

1.  
When as Qu—— A—— of great renown  
Great Britain's sceptre swayed,  
Besides the Church, she dearly loved  
A dirty chamber-maid.<sup>1</sup>

2.  
O! Abi—— that was her name,  
She starched and stitched full well,  
But how she pierced this royal heart,  
No mortal man can tell.

3.  
However, for sweet service done,  
And causes of great weight,  
Her royal mistress made her, Oh!  
A minister of state.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *chambermaid* Abigail Masham was appointed one of Anne's bedchamber women in 1697, a post that required performing the tasks of a personal maid; this post was less prestigious than that of lady of the Queen's bedchamber, an office that was the equivalent of social companion, assumed by women of aristocratic birth (Gregg, *Queen* 110-11). Abigail's position as a menial servant in the household of Baronet George Rivers led to questions about whether she could even be considered a gentlewoman. *the Church* See n9.

<sup>2</sup> *minister of state* Sarah constantly accused Anne of considering Abigail's political opinions in making her policy decisions.

4.

Her secretary she was not,  
 Because she could not write,<sup>3</sup>  
 But had the conduct and the care  
 Of some dark deeds at night.<sup>4</sup>

5.

The important pass of the back-stairs<sup>5</sup>  
 Was put into her hand;  
 And up she brought the greatest R——<sup>6</sup>  
 Grew in this fruitful land.

6.

“And what am I to do,” quoth he,  
 “Oh! for this favour great?”  
 “You are to teach me how,” quoth she,  
 “To be a sl—— of state.”<sup>7</sup>

7.

“My dispositions they are good,  
 Mischievous and a liar;  
 A fancy, proud, ungrateful b——<sup>8</sup>  
 And for the Church entire.”<sup>9</sup>

8.

“Great qualities!” quoth Machiavel.<sup>10</sup>  
 “And soon the world shall see,  
 What you can for your mistress do;  
 With one small dash of me.”

9.

In counsel sweet, Oh! Then they sat,  
 Where she did griefs unfold,  
 Had long her grateful heart oppressed,  
 And thus her tale she told:

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<sup>3</sup> *because ... write* Abigail was not illiterate, and several of her letters still exist, her handwriting suggesting someone both well-educated and accustomed to writing (Gregg, *Queen* 112).

<sup>4</sup> *some dark deeds at night* the accusation that Anne was having a sexual relationship with Abigail.

<sup>5</sup> *pass* control. *back-stairs* the private access to the Queen's chambers.

<sup>6</sup> *R—* Robert Harley (1661-1724), moderate Tory politician, secretary of state from 1704-08, and initially a part of the executive's ruling 'triumvirate,' along with Marlborough and Godolphin. By 1708, he had been ousted by them for undermining their influence with the Queen. There may be a play on 'robber.'

<sup>7</sup> *sl—* slut.

<sup>8</sup> *b—* bitch.

<sup>9</sup> *for the Church entire* i.e., Abigail declares that she is an ardent supporter of the Church of England. Anne's devotion to the national Church and her attempts to protect it were well-known.

<sup>10</sup> *Machiavel* a slur derived from the name and popular reputation of Nicolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), Italian political thinker; his writings made him a byword for the diabolical, cynical, amoral politician in early modern England.

10.

“From shreds and dirt in low degree,  
From scorn in piteous state,  
A duchess bountiful has made  
Of me a lady great.”<sup>11</sup>

11.

“Some favours she has heaped upon  
This undeserving head,  
That for to ease me, from their weight,  
Good God, that she were dead!”

12.

“Oh! Let me then some means find out,  
This teasing debt to pay.”  
“I think,” quoth he, “to get her place,  
Would be the only way.”<sup>12</sup>

[...]

From THE RIVAL DUCHESS, OR COURT INCENDIARY (1708)<sup>13</sup>

[...]

MADAM M[ASHAM]. Madam, you have guessed right, for a considerable part of my life has been employed in love, though I deceived the world in their opinion of me, as to that particular, as much as ever my aforementioned friend<sup>14</sup> did. Especially at court I was taken for a more modish lady, was rather addicted to another sort of passion, of having too great a regard for my own sex, insomuch that few people thought I would ever have married; but to free myself from that aspersion some of our sex labour under, for being too fond of one another, I was resolved to marry as soon as I could fix to my advantage or inclination.

MAINTENON. And does that female vice, which is the most detestable in nature, reign among you, as it does with us in France, where our young ladies are that way debauched in their nunnery education,<sup>15</sup> so that few people of quality<sup>16</sup> care now to have their daughters brought up in those places?

<sup>11</sup> *duchess* Sarah Churchill, duchess of Marlborough; she introduced her cousin, Abigail, into Anne's service.

<sup>12</sup> The ballad continues for another 23 verses, satirizing Abigail, Harley and the Tories, with the last two stanzas fantasizing about Anne coming to her senses, ejecting Abigail, and hanging Harley.

<sup>13</sup> The title page notes: “In a dialogue between Madam Maintenon and Madam M.” No publisher; only the place of publication (London) and the date are imprinted.

<sup>14</sup> *aforementioned friend* Robert Harley, whom earlier in the tract Madam Masham says is able to assume “as many shapes as Proteus,” and has only ever been true to the service of Catholic France (5).

<sup>15</sup> *young ladies . . . education* a common English stereotype of Catholic convent life. See Erasmus and Barrin, print anthology, pp. 425-9 and pp. 506-14.

<sup>16</sup> *quality* rank.

MADAM M[ASHAM]. Oh, madam, we are arrived to as great perfection in sinning that way as you can pretend to, as you may guess by the following story. A lady of fashion calling for a comrade of hers, a pretty young creature, to carry her to the play, a gentleman of her acquaintance then visiting her, gave her his hand to the coach, where having put the lady, the glass was immediately drawn up, and the innocent young lady cried out aloud for help; the gentleman running after, thinking some accident might have happened, the lady desired to go out of the coach and be carried home again. The gentleman was surprised to see the lady in such a fright, and not guess any reason for it, conducted her home; but afterward was informed by another female friend of her, that the lady, who called of her in the coach, as she apprehended,<sup>17</sup> attempted to ravish<sup>18</sup> her; what she meant by it the innocent young one was a stranger to; but these things are no novelties with us now.

[...]

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<sup>17</sup> *apprehended* understood.

<sup>18</sup> *ravish* rape.