A Countess Transformed:
How Lady Susan Vere Became Lady Anne Clifford

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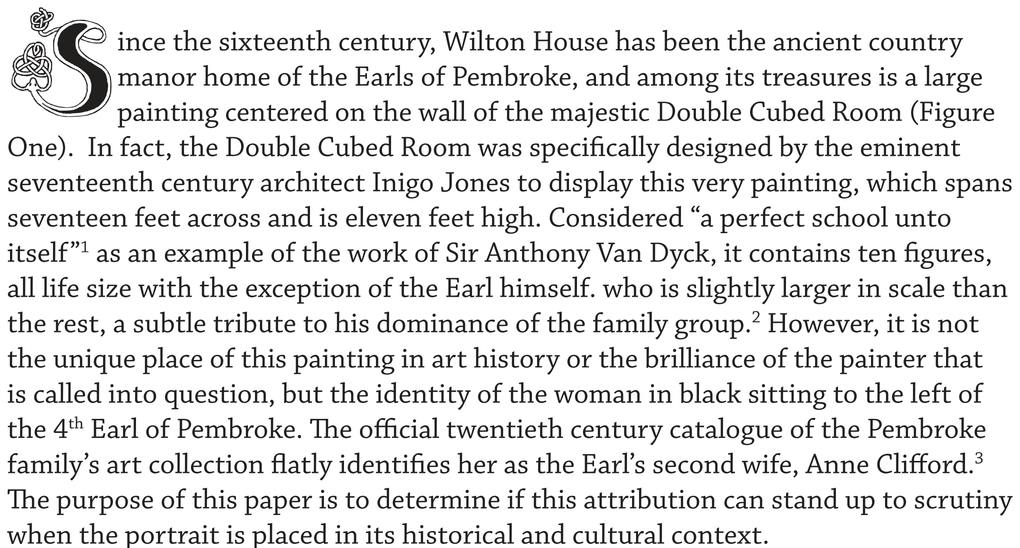

Since the sixteenth century, Wilton House has been the ancient country manor home of the Earls of Pembroke, and among its treasures is a large painting centered on the wall of the majestic Double Cubed Room (Figure One). In fact, the Double Cubed Room was specifically designed by the eminent seventeenth century architect Inigo Jones to display this very painting, which spans seventeen feet across and is eleven feet high. Considered "a perfect school unto itself"[1] as an example of the work of Sir Anthony Van Dyck, it contains ten figures, all life size with the exception of the Earl himself. who is slightly larger in scale than the rest, a subtle tribute to his dominance of the family group.[2] However, it is not the unique place of this painting in art history or the brilliance of the painter that is called into question, but the identity of the woman in black sitting to the left of the 4th Earl of Pembroke. The official twentieth century catalogue of the Pembroke family's art collection flatly identifies her as the Earl's second wife, Anne Clifford.[3] The purpose of this paper is to determine if this attribution can stand up to scrutiny when the portrait is placed in its historical and cultural context.

The official reason for the identification of Lady Anne Clifford is the fact that Philip, the 4th Earl of Pembroke, was married to her when the portrait was painted. It is also an historical fact that Philip was married to his first wife, Lady Susan Vere, when the First Folio of William Shakespeare was published in 1623, and Philip and his older brother William are the "incomparable paire of brethren" to whom the First Folio was dedicated.[4] It should be noted that the familial relationship between the dedicatees and Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford – a result of this marriage – appears to be troubling to orthodoxy; Oxford, Philip's father-in-law, is widely regarded as the leading alternative candidate by those who doubt the traditional attribution of Shakespeare's works.

Figure One: 1740 Engraving of The Pembroke Family by Bernard Baron, after Sir Anthony Van Dyck, c. 1635 (Courtesy of the Royal Galleries of Scotland).

The six arguments presented in this paper support the position that the woman seated at the left of the 4th Earl is not his second wife, Lady Anne Clifford – as proffered by the Wilton House catalogue – but his first wife, Lady Susan Vere. If so, then the suggestion might be put forth that the substitution of Countess Anne for Countess Susan as the Earl's Lady in the Van Dyck may have something to do with the authorship issue.[5] Thus, the identity of the Countess takes on special import. In order to ascertain her identity, the circumstances of Philip's two marriages come into play.

In 1604, the court of King James was bustling with the news of the marriage of the handsome young Philip Herbert and Lady Susan Vere, the third daughter of the 17th Earl of Oxford.[6] It was considered a love match, a surprising occurrence in a time when marriages were arranged for dynastic aggrandizement. Even more remarkable is the largesse that King James bestowed on the union. He was, in effect, the wedding planner, financing the celebration, which went on for days at enormous cost, and supplying the new couple with gifts of money and property, even fulfilling the patriarchal duty of providing Susan Vere with her marriage portion. The King walked the bride down the aisle, accompanied by his royal family. In a statement not often reiterated by historians, King James is reported to have said that had he not already been a married man, he would have married Susan Vere

himself, rather than give her to his favorite, Philip Herbert.[7] It is further reported that the King showed up at the couple's bedside bright and early the next morning for a firsthand account of their wedding night. They managed to have ten children, presumably without the supervision of the King, and their marriage of approximately twenty-five years ended when Susan died from smallpox in 1629.

Philip inherited the Pembroke title at his older brother's death in 1630 and remarried later that year. His choice, Lady Anne Clifford, was an unexpected decision, for, in the words of a Herbert family biographer, her "attractions could not have been conspicuous." [8] It is odd that the eligible bachelor took on the inimitable widow of the Earl of Dorset, a stubborn woman whose negotiating skills had been well honed in decades of legal battles with her Clifford cousins. In fact, she had put up a fight of such magnitude in her efforts to reclaim the Clifford properties that King James himself stepped in to referee the bloodbath. When his royal judgment went against her, she refused to accept it, withstanding enormous pressure from her first husband and just about everybody attached to the royal court. We can gauge her strength of character in one of her letters, in which she wrote that she would not comply with the King's Award "no matter what misery it cost me." The King's decision was ultimately put in place by coercion.[9]

It is not surprising that she brought this steely determination to her marriage with Philip, and even less surprising that the marriage was a disaster, certainly from Philip's point of view. The marriage ended after four years when Philip cast her out of his lodgings in Whitehall Palace in December of 1634,[10] leaving himself "virtually widowed a second time." [11]

Some historians suggest that Van Dyck began the Pembroke family painting in 1634. Although this date may be merely an inadvertent error, it is an impossibility, as Van Dyck was out of the country from October of 1633 until March of 1635.[12] He could not have begun work on this painting until the summer of 1635, exactly the time when the negotiations for the final separation between Philip and Anne were completed.[13] Given Philip's temper and Anne's obstinacy, it is a safe bet that the discussions between their representatives had not been pleasant.

But there is more to the story. When Philip (hereafter called Pembroke) booted Lady Anne out of his palace lodgings, he effectively banished her from the court of King Charles as well. With this "catastrophic collapse of her status and her cause," Lady Anne became a veritable *persona non grata* at the Caroline Court.[14] Surprisingly, even her own biographers agree that this enormous breach was her fault. Both the Herbert and Clifford family historians concur that Pembroke, in marrying Lady Anne, sought a marriage between one of his younger sons and Lady Anne's younger daughter, Isabella Sackville.[15] A union of their families in the next generation would strengthen Pembroke's claim to Lady Anne's patrimony. By 1634, it was time to formalize the Herbert/Sackville betrothal, something that Pembroke considered part of their agreement when they married four years earlier.

On that fateful December day at Whitehall Palace, Pembroke had apparently called her hand and found that she could not be prevailed upon to finalize the engagement of her Isabella and his son. Pure and simple, she wanted Isabella to

marry an Earl. A younger son, even a scion of the prestigious Herbert family, just wasn't good enough. Pembroke's fury toward his second wife is understandable in light of the fact that she reneged on their deal. Not only was it a breach of good faith, but a humiliating rejection of his family.[16] It should be out of the question that he would then choose to immortalize Anne Clifford in his family celebration portrait.

But there is more to discover in this multifaceted investigation of Van Dyck's great painting. The beautiful young woman in the luminous silver dress can hardly be overlooked. She is Lady Mary Villiers, and it is fitting that she is the central figure in the portrait, for it is her place in the Pembroke family group that is commemorated in Van Dyck's remarkable work of art.

Mary Villiers was the daughter of George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham, whose rise to the top ranks of the English nobility is well known. Mary was his eldest child; after his assassination in 1628 she was taken into the royal household, where she was raised as the "spoilt pet of the court."[17] Her marriage contract to the Pembroke heir had been signed in 1626 when she was four years old and Charles Herbert was seven. Her dowry, a staggering 25,000 pounds, would go into the coffers of the Pembroke family once the marriage was solemnized.[18]

Another element in the story is the munificence that King Charles bestowed on the Flemish master painter Anthony Van Dyck. Van Dyck was knighted in 1632, and, upon his return to England in the spring of 1635, the King himself paid the rent on Van Dyck's resplendent waterfront studio at Blackfriars, even building a causeway for his more convenient access to it by boat.[19] Replete with musicians and sumptuous banquets, Van Dyck's studio rapidly became the principal gathering place for the Caroline Court. An observer wrote that it "was frequented by the highest nobles, for example the King, who came daily to see him and took great delight in watching him paint and lingering with him." [20]

It is easy to connect the dots: King Charles visited Van Dyck's studio regularly, and could hardly have missed the Titianesque painting of the Pembroke family taking shape before his very eyes — even more compelling as Mary Villiers, the favorite of the court, occupied center stage in the family group. After the banishment of Lady Anne Clifford, it is bizarre to suggest that Pembroke would take this opportunity to rehabilitate *her* before the King and his court in the family dynastic portrait. By contrast, the record shows that Pembroke's first wife, Lady Susan Vere, had been well thought of in court circles. In his book *The Earls of Paradise*, Adam Nicolson acknowledges that Pembroke's first marriage was "a love-match with a beautiful and universally admired woman." [21]

There is a sad postscript regarding the young couple who are celebrated in the painting. Following the custom of separating newlyweds due to the youth of the bride, young Lord Charles Herbert was sent to Italy, where he died of smallpox soon after his arrival in Florence.[22] His father "took the news most grievously," and, eventually, the lucrative Villiers dowry was returned.[23]

Next we turn to the historiography of the identification of the Countess in the portrait. It seems that throughout the eighteenth century it was understood that Susan Vere was the woman in the portrait. In assessing the historical context of the

painting, David Howarth, an art historian at the University of Edinburgh, has this to say in his recent book, *Images of Rule*:

> To Pembroke's left a woman sits huddled in black. It has come to be assumed that her tense, sullen isolation indicates Pembroke's second wife, Lady Anne Clifford, with whom Pembroke had contracted a loveless marriage. However, this woman …is shrouded in black, hands folded on stomach as was conventional in recumbent effigies of the dead, and it was presumably these features which made [Freeman] O'Donoghue in his catalogue of the British portrait prints in the British Museum, suggest that this disconsolate creature is in fact a posthumous likeness of Pembroke's first wife, Lady Susan Vere. *This is surely right*.[24]

It is nice that an expert of Howarth's academic stature disputes the attribution of Lady Anne Clifford; thus, his statement, coming at the end of the twentieth century, bears repeating: the Countess "is in fact a posthumous likeness of Pembroke's first wife, Lady Susan Vere." [25]

There are further reasons besides the sitter's somber appearance for the Susan Vere identification in the British Museum catalogue. Susan is the sitter of record in the engraving of the painting that was made in 1740, approximately a hundred years after Van Dyck painted the work. This is, of course, the engraving that O'Donoghue lists in his catalogue.[26] Therefore, it seems that O'Donoghue was following the historical information. In fact, the artist, Bernard Baron, made two engravings of the painting in 1740. Both are archived in the National Galleries of Scotland, and the principal sitters are identified as "Philip Herbert…with his wife Susan Vere." [27]

Additionally, four eighteenth century catalogues contain inventories of the paintings and art at Wilton House. The earliest, published in 1731 by Gambarini of Lucca, refers to the Earl's "Lady, Daughter to the Earl of Oxford." [28] In subsequent catalogues authored by Richard Cowdry and James Kennedy respectively, the name of the "Lady's" father is eliminated, but the description implies that she is Susan Vere:

> This consists of ten whole Lengths, the two principal Figures (and they are sitting) are Philip Earl of Pembroke and his Lady; on the Right-Hand stand their five sons Charles Lord Herbert, Philip, (afterwards Lord Herbert) William, James, and John; on the Left their Daughter Anna Sophia , and her Husband Robert Earl of Carnavon; before them Lady Mary, Daughter of George Duke of Buckingham, and wife to Charles, Lord Herbert; and above in the Clouds are two Sons and a Daughter who died young.[29, 30]

There is no question that the children in the portrait, referred to as "their five sons" and "their Daughter," are Susan Vere's children. There were no children from Pembroke's marriage to Anne Clifford. However, Susan's name is only *implied*

(because the children are hers); this does seem to be a bit of an oversight. Countess Susan was the daughter of an Earl and the granddaughter of Lord Burghley, whose stellar position in English history needs no elaboration here. Lady Mary Villiers is referenced in these catalogues as the "Daughter of George Duke of Buckingham." It should not be too much to ask that "his Lady" be recognized both by her name and aristocratic lineage. In the fourth and last catalogue, Richardson's *Aedes Pembrochianae*, her identity is revived; she is again "Susan, daughter of Edward, Earl of Oxford." [31]

Along with the identification of the Baron engraving of 1740 (Figure One) and the identifications in the eighteenth century catalogues, there is an eyewitness account of a traveler who visited Wilton House in 1738:

> And now I am gone so far I am come to the grand point, the account of the great picture, my heart begins to fail me…and a bold undertaking it is for me, to give you any account of the noble picture…. On my Lord's left hand sits my Lady in a great chair, all in black, with her hands before her in a great tranquility: she was Susan, daughter to Edward, Earl of Oxford.[32]

In 1801, the antiquarian John Brittan wrote an extended account of the Van Dyck portrait in his *Beauties of Wiltshire*, mostly dealing with the unfortunate cleaning processes to which the painting had been subjected earlier. At this time, Philip is still sitting next to "Susan his wife." [33] The last time that her name appears in print as the Earl's Countess is in an 1823 guidebook.[34]

These sources demonstrate that it was understood for nearly two centuries that the Earl's "Lady" was Susan Vere. The change of identity from the first wife to the second is a subsequent phenomenon. But when was this adjustment made?

Notices of the painting are few and far between in the nineteenth century. Writing in 1824 in his *Picture Galleries of England,* William Hazlitt notes that "there are the old Lord and Lady Pembroke." [35] "Old Lady Pembroke," as he calls her, has no name at all, but she is not quite yet Lady Anne Clifford. Continuing in his customary gruff tone, Hazlitt describes the Earl's Countess as "his help-mate looking a little fat and sulky by his side…." On behalf of the Royal Gallery in Berlin, Director Gustav Waagen came out in 1838 with a multi-volume tome: *Art and Artists in England*. Van Dyck's painting is now of "The Earl and His Countess." Again, the name of the Countess is omitted, but in a tiny slip twixt cup and lip, Waagen notes that "*her* daughter," Anna Sophia, is to "*her* left" (emphases added).[36]

After Waagen, there are only occasional references to the portrait, and these recall Horace Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting in England*. Published in the late eighteenth century, Walpole's book is the source of the oft quoted (and previously mentioned) praise that the Van Dyck portrait of the Pembroke family "would serve alone as a school of this master." However, Walpole had scrupulously avoided mentioning any of the sitters by name; later commentaries, based on his observations, are silent on this point.[37]

With the turn of the twentieth century, we turn our attention to the distinguished authority and art connoisseur, Sir Lionel Cust. He was the curator of The National Portrait Gallery, editor of the Burlington Magazine, and a member of The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.[38] In 1900 he published a definitive volume on the work of Sir Anthony Van Dyck, in which he has this to say about what he calls this "work of great importance":

> The principal painting there is the immense composition representing the fourth Earl of Pembroke with his second wife, Anne Clifford, and his family, including his son Philip, Lord Herbert, afterwards fifth Earl of Pembroke, his son's wife Penelope Naunton, and also his daughter Anne Sophia, with her husband Robert Dormer, Earl of Carnavon.[39]

Cust's identification seems to be the line of demarcation for the official attribution of Lady Anne Clifford as the Earl's lady in black, one that has been adhered to throughout the twentieth century with the two exceptions previously noted. Aside from the introduction of Lady Anne Clifford onto the canvas, Cust made an obvious mistake when he substituted Penelope Naunton for Lady Mary Villiers! Where did Penelope Naunton come from? A quick check in any book about the peerage will reveal that Penelope, the wealthy heiress of Ralph Naunton, married Paul, Viscount Bayning in 1634 and was widowed in 1638, thereby freeing up her person and her pocketbook for the Pembroke earldom. When she married Philip, Lord Herbert in 1639, the paint on Van Dyck's canvas was quite dry.[40]

In 1907 a new catalogue of the Wilton House treasures was published. The author, Nevile R. Wilkinson, had been a Captain of Her Majesty's Coldstream Regiment of Foot Guards, but perhaps his qualifications for the task of an art historian were enhanced by his marriage to a daughter of the Earl of Pembroke.[41] In his grand two-volume folio – later referred to as the Great Catalogue – Captain Wilkinson reinforces the Lady Anne Clifford attribution. In the chapter about the 4th Earl and his family, Wilkinson devotes four pages to the virtues of Lady Anne Clifford, while Susan Vere's name appears only once, specifically as the mother of just one of the Earl's children. For all practical purposes, Susan has disappeared into the woodwork as a nearly anonymous first wife.

Following Captain Wilkinson, Dr. George C. Williamson contributed to the proliferation of the Lady Anne Clifford identification in the Van Dyke portrait. Williamson was the author of an impressive array of books on literary, historical and cultural subjects, and it is surely his endorsement that sealed the deal, so to speak.[42] In his 1922 limited edition biography of Lady Anne, he goes to great lengths to describe her "grave countenance" in Van Dyck's painting.[43]

Then he reveals that he has examined *another* much smaller portrait of Lady Anne Clifford at Wilton House. Hoping that two wrongs will make a right, Williamson has this to say about the heretofore unknown small portrait:

> It had been forgotten for many years, and was not included in the great catalogue of the Wilton pictures [Captain Wilkinson's two volumes], but was found in an upstairs room…It bears a long inscription saying that it represents Lady Anne, and the likeness to that in the great Van Dyck is *quite unmistakable*, although the portrait depicts her more cheerful in appearance…She has suspended from the front of the corsage a miniature of Lord Pembroke. As she is in a black dress, it is possible that this portrait may have been painted immediately after Lord Pembroke's decease.[44]

The suggestion that the small portrait was painted after Pembroke's death is impossible if the portrait is, indeed, of Lady Anne Clifford. Pembroke died in 1650; Lady Anne was born in 1590. The sitter in the small painting is hardly a sixty-year-old woman.[45] Dr. Williamson, of all people, should be able to do better than this. That this painting was not included in any of the Wilton House catalogues is most intriguing: *what else* has not been included in these historic catalogues? A unique feature of the portrait is the miniature of Pembroke worn at the neck of the sitter. Williamson was an expert on miniature painting, and he should have been able to recognize a likeness of Pembroke when he saw it. A miniature brooch was likely to be worn by a wife; hence, the wearer's identity can be surmised by the simple process of elimination. With the subject's age and family relationship in mind, the presumption should be entertained that the balding woman with the aquiline features is Susan Vere.[46]

Of course it would be helpful to have a portrait to work from that was a clearly established likeness of Susan Vere. In an ancient catalogue of 1842, titled *A Hand-Book to Public Galleries of Art In and Near London*, there is a listing of a "Portrait of a Lady in Rich Dress" at the Dulwich Picture Gallery.[47] It is identified as a portrait of "Susan Vere, first wife of Philip Earl of Pembroke." Better yet, it is listed as a painting by Van Dyck. It would be just what the doctor ordered for comparison, even though the compiler observed that the painting was in poor condition, noting that it "has suffered terribly." [48] However, since the 1842 attribution, the identity of the painter has been changed from Van Dyck to Cornelius Johnson the Elder, and the identity of the sitter is officially classified as unknown. Now called "A Lady in Blue," it remains in the collection of the Dulwich Picture Gallery.

These two portraits certainly deserve consideration as possible renditions of Susan. When compared to each other, the features are similar enough to be the same person, painted by a great artist and a lesser one. Obviously, the painting formerly attributed to Van Dyck far surpasses the small painting, which Williamson attributed to William Dobson, a Van Dyck follower.[49] Both sitters are balding, a feature far removed from Lady Anne Clifford, whose abundant dark hair was one of her better physical attributes.

When the "Lady in Blue" and the Countess in Van Dyck's Pembroke family portrait are compared, the pose is strikingly similar. Both share the sideward glance that is familiar in Van Dyck's work, as well as the sensitivity of facial expression that is a hallmark of the master painter. By contrast, much of the portraiture of the era was in keeping with the ubiquitous, static Jacobean effigies.[50]

However, unless one of these portraits is eventually identified as Susan Vere, then no established portraits of her are extant. We do, however, have paintings of Lady Anne Clifford with which to compare the lady in the Pembroke family portrait. At approximately age twenty-eight, Lady Anne sat for William Larkin and the next year for Paul van Somer, both distinguished artists of the era.[51] A portrait in a private collection dates from 1629, a year before her marriage to Pembroke; attributed to Gerard Honthorst, this portrait is the closest in time to Van Dyck's family portrait.[52] There are two representations of *her* by Sir Peter Lely from the mid to late 1640s; they correspond almost exactly to her portrait in the right panel of her great triptych painted in the mid-1640s, about a decade after Van Dyck painted the Pembroke family.[53] Commenting on these later portraits, a recent biographer remarked how much Lady Anne had aged in only ten years "since Van Dyck painted her." [54] That these renditions of Lady Anne bear no resemblance to the Earl's Countess in the Van Dyck is compelling evidence that she is not the sitter in that painting; there is not even a remote possibility that Van Dyck would fail to capture such elementary elements as Lady Anne's dark hair and distinctive features, including the dimple in her chin.[55] Lady Anne's physiognomy simply does not match that seen in sitter in the Pembroke family portrait.

In spite of the lack of resemblance between the many portraits of Lady Anne and the sitter in the Van Dyck, her identification is perpetuated by her twentieth century biographers, who put their imaginations to work to account for the sitter's remote appearance, disengaged from the family group. Martin Holmes describes her "detachment" and Richard Spence refers to her as "looking withdrawn," hoping this will explain away the Countess' vacant "oblivious gaze." [56] Both biographers leave unexplained why the Countess is clothed in basic, somber black, admittedly "almost humbly in comparison" to her husband with his Garter regalia and the colorfully attired young people around her.[57]

The costuming itself is an indication that the presence of the Countess in the painting is a fiction, an example of what one authority calls "the typical Jacobean taste for ingenuity in paradox."[58] In a recent study, Emile Gordenker discusses how Van Dyck used clothing to fictionalize his subjects.[59] That the lady in black is not in the rich dress of a Countess, while all the other figures are elaborately attired, is significant. Van Dyck used simple, flowing costuming to place his sitters "between the actual world and the realm of mythology." [60] The Countess is the only one of the ten figures *not* in contemporary court dress, and is thereby removed from real time. Furthermore, the three cherubs floating at the top corner are obvious allegorical iconography that further enhances the fictionalization of the family grouping.[61]

The folded, overlapped arms of the Countess are another clue that the sitter is Pembroke's deceased wife, not his living but estranged one. Van Dyck uses this pose in only one other portrait, that of Cecilia Crofts. According to Malcolm Rogers, "Her arms are folded in a cradling gesture over her womb, perhaps indicating that she was pregnant when the portrait was painted." [62] It seems that the folded hands and cradled arms are associated with motherhood, an appropriate motif for the matriarch of a dynasty.[63] A closer look at Cecilia Crofts reveals that her arms are more rounded,

her fingers more delicate and loose than Pembroke's Countess. Though the pose is essentially the same, Cecilia Crofts appears graceful and natural. Again, the skill of the master painter is apparent in the subtle artistry. Cecilia Crofts' arms are rounded and gentle; those of Pembroke's Lady are squared and rigid.

If a visitor were standing before this painting in the Double Cube Room at Wilton House – and could see it clearly without being blinded by the magnificence of the room and the treasures it houses – he or she might notice that the Countess is "*noticeably thinly painted*" in comparison to the rest of the figures.[64] The austere Countess is a foremost example of Van Dyck's "miraculous rendering of surface textures." [65] *She* is ethereal, a gossamer figure captured in the thin paint. She is not quite there, even on the canvas, in the same way that the other family members are.

The contrast between this stationary figure and the rest of the family, in motion about her, is striking. It could be a scene from a well-choreographed ballet. Daughter Anna Sophia is the only one who has actually found her place on the stage as she reaches for her husband's hand. Her husband, the Earl of Carnavon, is moving up to the next step, as is Lady Mary Villiers, who turns to glance back at the viewer. Pembroke is turning and gesturing to his right, introducing his heir, it is thought, to his bride.[66] The two older boys are turning towards him, flaunting their attire, and one of the three younger boys is directing his attention upwards, as if the cherubs floating above were a distraction. Amidst all the commotion, the thinly painted figure with the squared off arms gazes vacantly away, and her stillness is palpable.

Clearly, the purpose of the painting was to celebrate the Pembroke family dynasty. It is reasonable that Countess Susan would be given the respect she is due at her husband's side, as the dynastic survival of the Herbert family was assured by the children of their marriage. David Howarth notes: "It was entirely appropriate that Van Dyck should have included the mother of Pembroke's children. The spirit of the Earl's first wife thus compliments the presence of Lady Mary Villiers, by whom Pembroke expected to be provided with grandchildren." [67]

In summary, there are many reasons for the Susan Vere identification: (1) the breakup of the marriage between Pembroke and his second wife by the time of the portrait; (2) the eighteenth century historical identifications; (3) the sitter's lack of resemblance to Lady Anne's established portraits; (4) the rigid, funereal pose of the sitter with the fictionalized attire and symbolism of matriarchy, all rendered in thin paint by Van Dyck; and (5) the common sense notion that the matriarch of a dynasty would be represented in the family dynastic portrait.

As previously stated, twentieth century scholars use the marriage of Pembroke and Lady Anne Clifford to justify their identification of her in the painting; and, indeed, the Earl's second marriage would stay on the books until one of them died, in spite of their *de facto* divorce.[68] This circumstance notwithstanding, it seems that the "time is out of joint," and this departure from real time, called chronological incongruity or chronological dissonance, should be addressed. Therefore, one question is still on the table: Were posthumous likenesses used in other paintings of the era?

Numerous examples of chronological latitude can be found. The well known painting of Sir Thomas More and his family was commissioned by More's grandson in 1593. In this multi-generational composite, the living Thomas More II is elderly and appears to be about the same age as his great-grandfather at the other side of the painting. His own father is a young man, and his famous grandfather, who was executed by Henry VIII in 1535, appears as he did in the fullness of life.[69]

Another example of chronological incongruity, as well as an example of the custom of commemorating lifetime landmarks in works of art, can be found in the charming family gathering of Henry VIII. In this painting, the King celebrates his decision to put his two daughters back in the line of succession in 1544.[70] Henry's son Prince Edward, the Tudor heir, is standing at his father's right knee. The Queen chosen for the place of honor at the King's left is his third wife, Jane Seymour, who had died giving birth to the Prince six years earlier. Of course, in real time, Henry was happily married (more or less) to his sixth wife, Queen Catherine Parr.

Art historians allow that this painting, called "The Family of Henry VIII," was a precedent for Van Dyck's portrait, so it must be asked if they are sure – *absolutely certain* – that it is the deceased Queen Jane who is at Henry's side and not the contemporaneous Queen Catherine.[71] That identification is positive. The image of Jane Seymour was copied, almost exactly, from an earlier painting by Hans Holbein dating from 1537. The gabled hood and whelk-shell headdress are an unmistakable mark of Queen Jane. In *Tudor Costume and Fashion*, Herbert Norris explains that Henry's later Queens chose the more fashionable French hood and headdress.[72]

Van Dyck himself was called upon to portray deceased loved ones on canvas. Sir Kenelm Digby also commissioned two paintings of his wife, Venetia Stanley, after her death. The first was painted two days after her unexpected demise, when Van Dyck responded quickly to Digby's request to paint her before her body was removed for burial. This memorial keepsake was said to have been a great comfort to Sir Kenelm.[73] Moreover, in a subsequent effort to vindicate her reputation, he commissioned Van Dyck to paint an elaborate allegory of her as Prudence, something she had hardly been in her younger days as the notorious courtesan of the Carolinian Court. Again, as he did with the Pembroke Family portrait, Van Dyck uses an allegorical scenario to fictionalize his subject, and "Prudence" is crowned by cherubs — her "virtue rewarded after death." [74]

The tomb of George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham, affords another example of chronological irregularity. Located in the Henry VII Chapel in Westminster Abbey, the dress and appearance of the Duke's children have been used to determine when the monument was completed.[75] Lady Mary Villiers appears in effigy as a child on the tomb, alongside her brothers. In a few years, she will be a young woman on Van Dyck's canvas. Included in this funerary scene is a boy, reclining with his right arm supported on a skull. This is Charles, the Duke's deceased son. His presence along with the three surviving children is another example of the convention of including deceased family members within the living family group.

Things did not go well for Philip Herbert in his later years. His marriage to Lady Anne Clifford cost him dearly. He never saw a shilling from her estates, and

did not even manage to reel in her younger daughter as a match for his younger son — something that would have been a real coup for the Herbert family.[76] When the difficulties of their marriage are considered, it is startling that the memory of Lady Anne Clifford, and not Lady Susan Vere, is raised up by future generations of art historians as the sitter of the Pembroke family tryptych.

It brings up the question of motivation: Could it be that this exchange of identity is merely an inadvertent error? Or is this erroneous attribution motivated by something more profound? Might the suppression of Lady Susan's identity be connected, somehow, to the Shakespeare Authorship Question? Researchers Bernice and Alan Cohen, among others, think that there is such a connection, and provide additional information about the Van Dyck portrait in an article published in the De Vere Society Newsletter.[77] As the Cohens note, some things fall into place when Countess Susan Vere is factored into the equation. She was associated with Ben Jonson, and this has led to the proposal that it was Susan's influence that motivated the "incomparable brethren" to support Ben Jonson in publishing Shakespeare's First Folio. Furthermore, it would explain how Jonson had access to the unpublished Shakespeare manuscripts; Susan Vere could have inherited the manuscripts from her father and passed them along to him.[78]

In commenting on the poetry of Susan's father, Edward de Vere, the nineteenth century editor Dr. Grosart wrote that "An unlifted shadow lies across his memory."[79] The suppression of Susan's identity in the Van Dyck portrait is a tangible indicator that this shadow has fallen on her as well. If the Wilton House catalogues and the family biographies are any indication, the Pembroke family descendants – her own descendants – have systematically removed her from her rightful place in the family chronicles. Only one little problem remains after centuries of a deliberate effort to erase her memory: Countess Susan Vere's face cannot be erased from the Van Dyck masterpiece on the wall at Wilton House.

Endnotes

[1] Richardson, *Aedes Pembrochianae A New Account and Description of the Antiquities and Curiosities in Wilton-House* (London: R. Baldwin, 1774), 74.

[2] Alfred Moir, *Anthony Van Dyck* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1994), 114.

[3] Sidney, 16th Earl of Pembroke. *A Catalogue of the Paintings and Drawings at Wilton House* (London: Phaidon Press LTD, 1968), 59.

[4] Margaret P. Hannay, *Phillip's Phoenix: Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 159-62. In 1597, Lord and Lady Pembroke sought the marriage of their older son William and Oxford's second daughter, Lady Bridget Vere. Oxford gave his consent to the match that "do greatly content me, for Bridget's sake, whome always I have wished a good husband…" The marriage negotiations fell apart due to political reasons.

[5] The presence of Susan Vere opens the door to issues which have been heretofore left largely unexplored. First, there is the question of the Herbert brothers' motivation for lending their names and political clout to the publication of the First Folio, something that Charlton Hinman describes as a "decidedly chancy venture" (*The Norton Facsimile*, x and xi). It may be thought that their motivation was the preservation of the masterpieces of a family patriarch, an interest not shown by the descendants of the traditional "Stratfordian Shakespeare." Unexplained too by the traditional story is the source of the "considerable outlay of capital" that Hinman finds was needed to get the Folio through the publishing process. Again, the Herbert "Brethren" are a likely source if for no other reason than that they are the only possible source of the "outlay" of venture capital needed to get the job done. But their motivation is puzzling and may be explained by the Herbert/Vere marriage. Another question is the extent of Ben Jonson's participation in the First Folio. Although orthodoxy reluctantly accepts him as the editor – once again because he is the only person in sight with the credentials for the job – great credit has been traditionally given to the actors Heminge and Condell. A closer examination of the longstanding relationship between Ben Jonson and the Pembroke family (including Countess Susan) diminishes the importance that has been attributed to Heminge and Condell and puts Ben Jonson in a different light.

[6] Lucy Aikin, *Memoirs of the Court of King James the First* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees Orme, Brown, 1822), 205. Sir Ralph Winwood's report of the nuptials includes additional details of the wedding celebration at court and information about the King's gift of 500 pounds land (i.e., property expected to produce an annual income of about 500 pounds) for the bride's jointure.

[7] Aikin, 205-06.

[8] Tresham Lever, *The Herberts of Wilton* (London: John Murray, 1967), 98. Shortly after the death of her first husband, the Countess contracted smallpox. As she writes, "which disease did so martyr my face."

[9] Richard T. Spence, *Lady Anne Clifford, Countess of Pembroke, Dorset and Montgomery (1590-1676)* (Great Britain: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1997), 40-58. Spence discusses in great detail Lady Anne Clifford's legal struggles to win back the Clifford properties from which she had been disinherited by her father's will.

[10] Spence, 99.

[11] Spence, 101.

[12] Susan J. Barnes, Nora De Poorter, Oliver Millar, Horst Vey, *Van Dyck, A Complete Catalogue of the Paintings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 8-9, 573. The 1968 Wilton House catalogue states that it was "painted in London, 1634-35." Confusion still exists on the dates of Van Dyck's sojourn in Brussels (59-60). There is an occasional suggestion that the painting dates to a time prior to Van Dyck's departure for Brussels in the fall of 1633. These are gainsaid by the appearance in the painting of Mary Villiers, who was born in March of 1622. The figure of Villiers in Van Dyck's large painting is certainly not an eleven-year-old child. Moreover, Robert Dormer, the Earl's son-in-law, had been out of the country on an extended trip, returning in June of 1635 to take his place to the left of his wife.

[13] The formal settlement of separation was signed on June 5, 1635.

[14] Spence, 101.

[15] Nevile R. Wilkinson, *Wilton House Pictures* (London: Cheswick Press, 1907), 290. Adam Nicholson, *Earls of Paradise* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2008), 222. Martin Holmes, *Proud Northern Lady*. (London: Phillimore & Co., LTD, 1975), 132. Spence, 101.

[16] Wilkinson, 290. Spence, 111.

[17] Wilkinson, 297. Mary Villiers was known at court by the pet name "Butterfly."

[18] Nicolson, 222. Differences of opinion on dates and facts of the Herbert/Villiers marriage vex the researcher every step of the way. Even the exact amount of the dowry is in question. Nicolson seems uncertain and gives the amount as 20,000 and 25,000 pounds in different places in his book. Lever agrees with 25,000 pounds (105). Howarth comes in on the low side with 10,000 pounds (227). Writing in 1907, Wilkinson puts the figure at 20,000 pounds (297).

[19] Van Dyck made many trips between England and the Continent. A detailed account of his travels and activities is provided in the Chronology at the beginning of the Complete Catalogue cited above (8-9).

[20] Emilie Gordenker, *Anthony Van Dyck and the Representations of Dress in Seventeenth-*

Century Portraiture (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2002), 10.

[21] Nicolson, 180-81. Nicolson devotes only a few paragraphs to Susan, describing her as "the entrancing woman Philip Herbert fell in love with," but does not provide any supporting details for these sparse, albeit flattering, comments.

[22] Lever, 105. Nicolson, 230-31.

[23] Nicolson, 221-23, 230-31. Marriages between children of aristocratic families were solemnized as soon as possible after the financial arrangements were made, sometimes when the betrothed were still youngsters. Certainly this is the case with Mary Villiers and Charles Herbert. According to Nicolson,"the ceremony was conducted at the end of Christmas, 1634 'by the Archbishop of Canterbury in the closet at Whitehall. It was done privately, and few invited, and sooner than was intended.'" If this date is correct, then the bride was only twelve years old. In such marriages, it was customary that cohabitation should not occur until the bride was older, and this could be up to four more years. Also, following the custom, the young groom was sent off to travel in Europe. Extrapolating the time line from Nicolson's account, Charles, Lord Herbert and his younger brother Philip departed for Italy in the summer of 1635. Both brothers took ill with smallpox shortly after their remove to Florence in late December, and Charles died there.

[24] David Howarth, *Images of Rule: Art and Politics in the English Renaissance, 1485-1649* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 226-27.

[25] David Howarth is a Professor of Art History at the University of Edinburgh. He is the editor of *Art and Patronage in the Caroline Court: essays in honour of Sir Oliver Millar,* and the author of the exhibition catalogue, *The Discovery of Spain*, for the 2009 exhibit at the National Gallery of Scotland.

[26] Freeman O'Donoghue, *Catalogue of Engraved British Portraits in the British Museum*, Vol. V (London: Longmans, 1922), 49. This source is cited by Howarth (304).

[27] Both engravings are in the permanent collection of the NGS, ID # EPL 34.1 and UP P 47. The former is available for reproduction in black and white photography, and the staff responds promptly to requests.

[28] Gambarini of Lucca, *A Description of the Earl of Pembroke's Pictures* (Westminster: A. Campbell, 1731), 8-9.

[29] Richard Cowdry, *A Description of the Pictures, Statues, Busto's, Basso-Relievos, and other curiosities at the Earl of Pembroke's House at Wilton* (London: J. Robinson, 1751), 58.

[30] James Kennedy, *A New Description of Pictures* (London: Benjamin Collins, 1758), 53.

[31] George Richardson, *Aedes Pembrochianae*. (Great Britain: Salisbury Press, 1795). 74. The Twelfth Edition is available through Google Digitized Books.

[32] Wilkinson, 302-03.

[33] John Brittan, *Beauties of Wiltshire, Vol 1* (London: J. D. Dewick,1801), 180.

[34] Alan Cohen and Bernice Cohen, "The Riddle of the Countess of Pembroke," in *The De Vere Society Newsletter,* June, 2009, 26. The guidebook, published in 1823 by J. P. Neale and T. Moule, identifies the sitters as "Philip, Earl of Pembroke,

and Susan his countess, daughter of Edward, Earl of Oxford."

[35] William Hazlitt, *Picture Galleries of England* (London: C. Templeman, 1836), 106-07. Citation from Google Digitized Books, University of Wisconsin collection.

[36] Gustav Waagen, *Treasures of Art in Great Britain, Vol. III* (London: John Murray, 1838; rpt. Elbiron Classics), 153. Several editions of this book are available through Google Digitized Books, but the pages describing the paintings at Wilton House appear in only one of the online editions.

[37] Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, *Vol. II* (London: J. Dodsley, 1786).

[38] Lionel Cust, *King Edward VII and his court: some reminiscences by Sir Lionel Cust, K.C.V.G.* (New York: E.P.Dutton, 1930), xix.

[39] Lionel Cust, *Van Dyck* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1900), 119.

[40] Lever, 106.

[41] Sidney, 9.

[42] Dr. Williamson was one of the general editors of Bryan's *Dictionary of Painters and Engravers*, still an important reference on library shelves. His *Curious Survivals: Habits and Customs of the Past That Still Live in the Present* as well as books on Pietro Vannucci, George Morland, and *The Anonimo: Notes on Pictures and Works of Art in Italy* are among his recently republished work. His versatility is apparent in the wide range of subjects on which he wrote, to name a few: *The Book of Amber*, *The Money of the Bible*, *Everybody's Book on Collecting*, *Guildford in Olden Times*, *The Imperial Russian Dinner Service*, and a *Reader's Guide to T.S. Eliot*.

[43] George C. Williamson, *Lady Anne Clifford* (Great Britain: Kendal, Titus, Wilson & Son, 1922), 349.

[44] Williamson, 349-50.

[45] Sidney, 38. While sticking by the Anne Clifford identification of the sitter, the 1968 Wilton House catalogue provides a more sensible assessment of the sitter's age: "...judging from her age, it may have been painted after her first husband's death, and before her remarriage." Anne Clifford was 34 years old at the death of her first husband; the woman in the small painting appears to be in her early thirties.

[46] This portrait is Item #95 in the 1968 Wilton House Catalogue. The inscription states that the sitter is Lady Anne Clifford. No image is provided in the catalogue, but the description fits the plate in Williamson's 1922 book, particularly as it is considered "neither good nor flattering." The miniature at her neck is now thought to be of her first husband, the Earl of Dorset. The catalogue notes that "Old re-paints were removed in 1950" (37-38).

[47] Mrs. Jameson, *Handbook to the Public Galleries of Art in and near London* (London: John Murray, 1842), 464. Kessinger Publishing, 2004. Mrs. Jameson lists this portrait as Item #134. It is now catalogued as Item #DPG89 (personal correspondence with the Dulwich Picture Gallery).

[48] Jameson, 464.

[49] The 1968 Wilton House catalogue does not suggest who the artist of Item #95 may have been.

[50] Nigel Llewellyn, *Funeral Monuments in Post-Reformation England* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 234. The resemblance of paintings of the time with funeral effigies is not accidental. Llewellyn notes that "to follow a painted portrait in the making of an effigy was standard practice throughout the post-Reformation period, especially when top people were being commemorated."

[51] Roy Strong, *The English Icon: Elizabethan & Jacobean Portraiture* (Great Britain: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 26-27, 313.

[52] Spence, 93.

[53] The series of images can be found in Spence. The young Anne at 74-77; the Honthorst rendition at 93; the elderly Lady Anne at 112-13.

[54] Spence, 111.

[55] In the *Complete Catalogue* edited by Barnes et al, there is no listing of a Van Dyck portrait of Lady Anne Clifford alone. If this book is as comprehensive as it appears, then Van Dyck did not paint Lady Anne (assuming that the identification of her in the Pembroke Family group is erroneous). As Van Dyck's subjects were courtiers, families and friends in the inner circle of the Royal Court, it is unsurprising that she was not granted the privilege of "sitting" for Van Dyck after her estrangement from Pembroke. Also, since many portraits of Lady Anne survive, it is odd that a Van Dyck would have gone missing, if indeed one was painted.

[56] Holmes, 128. Spence, 102.

[57] Spence, 102.

[58] Ronald W. Lightbrown, "Issac Besnier, Sculptor to Charles I, and His Work for Court Patrons." *Art and Patronage in the Caroline Court*, ed. Howarth, (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1993),148.

[59] Gordenker, 62.

[60] Gordenker, 52.

[61] Gordenker, 53.

[62] Malcolm Rogers, "'Golden Houses for Shadows': Some Portraits of Thomas Killigrew and His Family." *Art and Patronage in the Caroline Court*, ed. Howarth, 222-23.

[63] Oliver Millar, *The Age of Charles I* (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1972), 240. Martha von Monmouth is painted by Van Dyck with similarly folded hands, considered symbolic of her pregnancy. Barnes, 558-59. Millar notes that Van Dyck painted Queen Henrietta Maria with similarly folded hands when she was pregnant, though the arms were not overlapped as they are in the Crofts and Pembroke paintings.

[64] Barnes, 573.

[65] Richard Ollard, "Clarendon and the Art of Prose Portraiture in the Age of Charles II." *Art and Patronage in the Caroline Court, Essays in Honour of Sir Oliver Millar*, ed. Howarth,197.

[66] Moir, 114.

[67] Howarth, 227. The obsession of the upper classes with dynastic considerations

should be compelling motivation for Pembroke to put his first wife by his side in his grand dynastic portrait, even if his second marriage had been satisfactory, which it certainly was not.

[68] David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 86: "The difficulties that the upper aristocracy faced in obtaining a divorce can be seen in the infamous divorce trial of Lady Frances Howard and the Earl of Essex. Roderick Phillips observes: 'England was unique in the sixteenth century as the only country where an established or dominant reformed church did not break with the Roman Catholic doctrine of marital indissolubility.'"

[69] Karen Hearn, ed., *Dynasties: Painting in Tudor and Jacobean England, 1530-1630* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1996), 128-29.

[70] David Starkey, *Elizabeth: Apprenticeship* (Great Britain: Vintage, 2001), 30-31.

[71] Alfred Moir concurs with both the identifications and the influence of the Holbein mural as a model for Van Dyck's Pembroke Family, noting that "Holbein's mural of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour was destroyed by fire in 1698, but in the 1630s, it was at Whitehall where Pembroke had his London accommodations" (114).

[72] Herbert Norris, *Tudor Costume and Fashion* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1997), 287-88.

[73] Ann Sumner and Polly Amos. "Kenelm Digby and Venetia Stanley: The Love Story of the Seventeenth Century," *Death, Passion, and Politics Van Dyck's Portraits of Venetia Stanley and George Digby* (Great Britain: Dulwich Picture Gallery, 1996), 30-31.

[74] Graham Parry, "Van Dyck and the Caroline Court Poets," *Van Dyck 350*. eds. Susan J. Barnes and Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr. (Washington, Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1994), 259.

[75] Lightbrown, 150-52. The size of the younger son, born in April of 1629, is an important factor in dating the monument, as is the appearance of Lady Mary, the oldest child.

[76] Spence, 111.

[77] Cohen, 24-28.

[78] Mark Anderson, *Shakespeare By Another Name* (New York: Gotham Books, 2005), 371-72.

[79] J. Thomas Looney, *Shakespeare Identified*, ed. Ruth Loyd Miller (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1975), 124.