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Sir Anthony Van Dyck's Portraits of Sir William and Lady Killigrew, 1638

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'I ... doe desire nothinge in this world more then to have my Wife live [with] me'
Sir William Killigrew 1655

Van Dyck (1599-1641) was one of the most significant painters to work within the British Isles. In the centuries following his death he had a far greater influence on portraiture there than any other artist. The forms of portrait that he introduced during the years that he worked for the Stuart king Charles I and members of his Court were to be an inspiration to numerous later artists, including Sir Peter Lely, Thomas Gainsborough, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Richard Parkes Bonington and John Singer Sargent. Yet until 2002 Tate possessed only a single work by this most influential of masters, the full-length portrait of an unknown lady thought to be a member of the Spencer Family, which had been acquired in 1977. Although delightful, this work was not in tip-top condition.

Tate's acquisition of the portrait of *Sir William Killigrew* came in part through the 'acceptance in lieu' scheme, under which pre-eminent works of art and important heritage objects can be transferred into public ownership in payment of inheritance tax. The story might have ended there, but for the sudden unexpected appearance in an auction in January 2003 in New York of the companion piece to this picture, van Dyck's portrait of Sir William's wife, *Lady Mary Killigrew*. This picture had been known to be in a private collection somewhere in the USA, but exactly where had been unclear. Through an exceptional combination of circumstances, it became possible for Tate to bid for it, and thus to acquire it, too.

Thus the two portraits by van Dyck, both dated 1638, closely related in size and clearly conceived as a pair, are re-united at last within the Tate collection. We do not know how long they have been apart, but at the very least it has been a century and a half. Certainly by the early nineteenth century, Sir William's portrait was owned by the Carpenter family, who sold it at auction in 1853. At the same date, Lady Mary's portrait was almost definitely with the Grey family, who were Earls of Stamford. During the nineteenth century, the 7th Earl kept it at the family's house at Enville in Staffordshire, but research is currently under way to establish whether it was previously at the family's original residence, Dunham Massey (now a National Trust property).

Like many other artists, van Dyck painted a number of matching husband-and-wife portraits, particularly when he was living and working in Antwerp. One English pair are his early full-lengths of Sir Robert and Lady Shirley of 1622, thought to have been painted in Rome (Petworth House). It is thought, however, that the Killigrews, now at Tate, may be the only example from van Dyck's English period of a (non-royal) pendant pair in a British public museum.

Over the previous century, it had not been unusual for artists in Britain to receive commissions

to produce such paired portraits. Hans Holbein II, who worked for Henry VIII and his court during the years 1527–9 and 1534–43, painted a number, including those of Sir Henry and Lady Guildford, 1527 (The Royal Collection and the Saint Louis Art Museum, Missouri), and Dr William and Margaret, Lady Butts (Isabella Stewart Gardener Museum, Boston).

Sir Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641)
Portrait of Sir William Killigrew 1638
Tate: Accepted by HM Government in lieu of tax with additional payment (General Funds) made with assistance from the Patrons of British Art, Christopher Ondaatje and the National Art Collections Fund 2002
View in Tate Collection

Sir Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641)
Portrait of Mary Hill, Lady Killigrew 1638
Purchased with assistance from The Art Fund, Tate Members and the bequest of Alice Cooper Creed 2003
View in Tate Collection

Tate's own collection includes the two portraits of the Suffolk landowner *Sir Thomas Kytson* and his wife *Lady Kytson* for which the smart London painter George Gower was paid in 1573 (Tate N06090 and N06091). The Kytsons' portraits may not, in fact, have been designed as a pendant pair for, in both images, the sitter faces to the viewer's left, whereas it was customary, in companion portraits, for the sitters to be positioned in complementary directions. Almost invariably – as in the case of the Killigrews – the man is placed in the position of higher status, that is, on the viewer's left, a practice thought to derive from the rules of heraldry.

The Killigrews' portraits make up a true pair, he to our left, she to our right, with the outward arm of each curving gracefully inwards and low, in near mirror-images of one another. Behind each, in the distance, are beautifully depicted complementary landscapes. Van Dyck could be an accomplished landscape painter – as we know from the handful of remarkable watercolour sketches and drawings in ink that he made of English terrain (including that around Rye in Sussex) such as the *Landscape with Trees and Ships* in the Barber Institute of Fine Art, Birmingham. Here he has translated the freshness of such impressions into paint.

William Killigrew was descended from an old Cornish family, whose heraldic arms included a double-headed eagle on a white background (officially described as 'within a field Argent, an imperial eagle with two necks, within a bordure Bezante Sable'). William was baptised on 28 May 1606 in the parish church of Hanworth, Middlesex, where his parents had a country residence. He was the eldest of the twelve children of Sir Robert Killigrew and his wife Mary Woodhouse, nine of whom were to live to adulthood. Hanworth was conveniently placed for the royal palace of Hampton Court, and Sir Robert was an ambitious and energetic courtier on the rise, having been knighted by James I in 1603. He saw to it that all his children received a good education, and most of his daughters were to hold significant court positions. Anne (1607–41), for instance, was to

become dresser to Charles I's French queen, Henrietta-Maria. Her marriage in 1627 to George Kirke, one of Charles's gentlemen of the robes, was attended by the monarch himself. Elizabeth Killigrew (1622–81) on the other hand, a maid-of-honour to Henrietta-Maria, was to marry the future 1st Viscount Shannon, and in 1652 became the mistress of Charles II, bearing him a daughter called Charlotte-Jemima-Henrietta-Maria (a good string of Stuart family names, emphasising the infant's parentage!).

William's younger brother Thomas (1612–83), to whom we shall return later, was to become the best known of all the siblings, as a minor courtier and dramatist and, principally, as a theatrical manager after 1660. Another brother, Henry (1613–1700), entered the Church and became chaplain to the Duke of York – the future king James II – and Master of the Savoy Hospital in London.

William himself may have been educated at Thomas Farnaby's pioneering school in the City of London, near his parents' London residence in Lothbury. Certainly, in July 1623 he entered St John's College, Oxford as a gentleman-commoner, but did not stay long, for in April 1624 he was given a pass to travel abroad, with his cousin Maurice Berkeley and three servants. William thus set off on the Jacobean version of a 'Grand Tour', although his precise itinerary is not known. It is however, probable that he visited the Netherlands, where his younger brother Charles had a position as a page to the Prince of Orange and where the Killigrews had a well-placed friend, the diplomat and scholar, Constantijn Huyghens.

By May 1626, William was back in England, where he was knighted by Charles I. And it is likely that at about this time, or shortly before, he was married – to Mary Hill, daughter of John Hill of Honiley in Warwickshire. Thus William would have been aged around twenty at the time of his marriage; Mary's age at this time is unknown, as her date of birth is not recorded.

Mary and William were to have seven children. Their eldest son, Robert, was to be knighted at Breda in 1650 by the exiled Charles II; he spent many years as a soldier in the Netherlands. Another son, William, also had a military career; Henry died before his father. The couple's eldest daughter, Mary, was to marry a Dutch aristocrat, Frederick Nassau de Zuylestein, and to attend Charles I's daughter Mary, Princess of Orange at the Hague in the Netherlands. Elizabeth (died 1677) was to marry the future 6th Earl of Lincoln, and subsequently became a dresser to Charles II's queen, Catherine of Braganza. The third daughter, Susan (born 1629) married the 2nd Earl of Barrymore, and was to attend queen Henrietta-Maria in her Civil War exile. A fourth daughter, Cecilia, was born in 1635, but lived only two months. So, it is clear that the children of Sir William and Lady Killigrew continued the family tradition of court service.

At around the time of his marriage, William was appointed a Gentleman-Usher of the Privy Chamber to Charles I. At court, he moved in the circles of those who participated in the lavish entertainments – called 'masques' – that mingled drama, music, dance and rich costumes and elaborate settings within the ideals of platonic love imported by the French-born Henrietta-Maria. Although William's own plays were not performed or published until after the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, their format and sentiments echo those of the court dramas created for Henrietta-Maria in the late 1620s and 1630s.

In 1628, Sir William was elected Member of Parliament for both Newport and Penryn in Cornwall – although he subsequently waived his adoption for the former borough. From 1633 to 1635, he was Governor of Pendennis Castle, a post previously held by his father, who had died in 1633. He also involved himself in his father's project of draining fen lands – the Lindsey level – in Lincolnshire. This project was ultimately to exhaust his economic resources, and meant that he was to be financially hard-pressed for much of the rest of his life.

We know nothing of the circumstances in which the portraits of Sir William and his wife were commissioned or executed. What we do know is that the two works bear inscriptions – thought to be contemporary, or nearly contemporary – identifying the sitters, stating that they were painted by van Dyck and with the date 1638. Similar inscriptions and the same date are also found on pictures of other members of the Killigrew family.

These are a half-length portrait of *Thomas Killigrew* with a large dog, which survives in various versions – the prime one now at Weston Park in Shropshire – and a sombre double portrait of *Thomas Killigrew and a gentleman 'not known certainly'* (according to the eighteenth-century observer George Vertue), surrounded by symbols of mourning (The Royal Collection). Undated, but clearly from the same period is the beautiful full-length portrait of the Killigrews' sister, *Anne Kirke* in a gold dress (Huntington Art Gallery, San Marino, California), thought to mark her appointment in 1637 as dresser to Henrietta Maria. Anne Kirke appears again in a double portrait, with an unknown slightly older lady, also by van Dyck and dated 1638 (Hermitage, St Petersburg).

The year 1638 was a significant one for the family, for on 1st January they suffered the loss of Cecelia Crofts, the wife of Thomas Killigrew. Only a month later Cecelia's sister Anne Crofts also died. It seems certain that the elegiac quality of the male double portrait in the Royal Collection directly relates to this tragic event. It may also explain the pensive presentation of William in his own portrait. The viewer's attention is drawn to a ring, tied by a ribbon to the centre of his costly black satin jacket. Such rings are often seen in earlier portraits, and are thought to be in allusion to – or in memory of – a loved one.

Meanwhile, the political situation in England was deteriorating. With the outbreak of Civil War, the royalist William became captain of one of the two troops of horse guarding the person of Charles I, whom he accompanied to Oxford, after London was claimed by the Parliamentarians. Indeed, William seems to have treasured a letter written to him by the king in Oxford in January 1643, signed 'Your assured frend / Charles R.' After a riot in Lincolnshire in 1641, William was never able to regain his property in that county.

Having paid the fines levied on royalists by the winning Parliamentarians, he and his family found themselves in even worse financial straits. As he wrote in 1655, 'my wants do drive me live wherever I am welcome' and the republican general John Lambert gave him shelter from his creditors on the former crown property at Nonsuch, in Surrey. Poverty, it seems, necessitated Sir William and his wife living apart. In another letter, he wrote that the loss of his estate '... doth force me from the comforts of livinge with my Wife and Children, we being compelled to begge our bread in severall Countryes ... and this lookes as if my Wife and I were parted through discontent, though all our frends doe knowe that in thirty yeares beinge Maried we have never had one discontent or anger between us, ... I ... doe desire nothinge in this world more then to have my Wife live [with] me' (British Library, Add. MSS. 21,423, fol. 193). This may indicate that Lady Mary was, like many royalists – and not least, the surviving members of the Royal Family itself – in exile on the Continent. It is possible that the fine van Dyck portraits of Sir William and his wife could have been distrained or sold at this difficult time.

With the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy in Britain in 1660, Sir William's situation – although not his finances – improved considerably. He was re-appointed to his court post as Gentleman-Usher of the Privy Chamber and took up lodging in the palace at Whitehall. A plan of the palace from 1668 shows that he had an apartment near the river front close to those of the queen, Catherine of Braganza, whose Vice-Chamberlain he became. His wife, meanwhile, became dresser to their old patroness, the Queen-Dowager, Henrietta-Maria. He continued to pursue his interest in fenland drainage, but between 1662 and 1666 also concentrated on writing a number of

tragi-comedies, in a by-now rather old-fashioned idiom, resonant of the themes and preoccupations of Charles I's court. No doubt they would have appealed particularly to Henrietta-Maria. These plays are: *Selindra*, a chivalric adventure, staged by William's brother Thomas at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane in March 1662; *Pandora or the Converts*, a drama of matrimonial debate that was originally designed as a tragedy but reworked as a comedy and staged in around 1662; *Ormasdes or Love and Friendship*, written almost entirely in couplets, and printed in 1664; *The Siege of Urbin*, often considered his best work and written in circa 1665; and his least satisfactory play – actually a translation of a twenty-year-old Latin text – *The Imperial Tragedy*, published in 1669. Not all of them appear to have been performed on stage.

In 1660–1, as a mark of favour, Henrietta-Maria had granted William's wife Mary a lease on an extensive marsh in Lincolnshire. We do not know, however, how long the elderly re-united couple had together before Lady Mary died. It is certain that during the 1680s William continued to have money problems. By July 1693 he was reduced to lodging with his brother Henry, in his residence attached to Westminster Abbey. Towards the end of his life William published collections of his own writings on religious and moral themes. The 1694 dedication at the front of his *Mid-night and Daily Thoughts. In Prose and Verse* begins, ' I Live so much alone, that I have not found a Friend to whom I could communicate this new Bundle of my ... Thoughts' which suggests that he was now a widower. Certainly Lady Mary is not mentioned in William's will, which is dated 3 October 1695 (Public Record Office, PROB 11/427 s. 152). His principal bequest – 2,000 acres of fen-land – went to his sons Robert and William. Very soon after – the precise date is not known – he died. On 17 October 1695 he was buried at the Savoy Chapel in London.

The painter of these two portraits, Sir Anthony van Dyck, was born and trained in Antwerp, in present-day Belgium. After Sir Peter Paul Rubens, from whom he received some of his training, he was the leading Flemish painter of the seventeenth century. Van Dyck spent a few months in London between October 1620 and March 1621, before setting off for Italy, where he worked for some years, particularly in Genoa and Palermo. He also travelled to Venice and other cities where he was able to study the works of current and past artists in depth. He returned to Antwerp in 1627, and by the spring of 1632 had arrived in London to be immediately employed by king Charles I, who knighted him on 5 July 1632. Van Dyck lived and worked at Blackfriars in London, in a property on the river Thames. His portraits of Charles and members of his family re-defined the image of the British monarchy. In late 1633 or early 1634 he went back to Flanders, but was back in England in spring 1635, where he produced some of his finest portraits. Van Dyck also collected art, and is known to have owned works by Titian. In March 1638, the year inscribed on the Killigrew portraits, van Dyck was granted denization – a form of naturalisation which gave him certain citizenship rights in Britain. Towards the end of his life, he suffered considerable ill health, perhaps compounded by overwork, and died in London in December 1641, eight days after the birth of a daughter to his wife Mary Ruthven, a Scottish noblewoman.

Sir Oliver Millar has described the characteristics of van Dyck's English portraits as'lustrous colour, nervous draftsmanship, linear rhythms, consummate elegance, the sense of strain or melancholy, and a nervous tension' – qualities that the paired portraits of Sir William and Lady Killigrew demonstrate in abundance.

The prolific van Dyck seems to have worked rapidly, organising his professional day in order to work on as many portraits as possible. Eberhard Jabach, a Paris-based collector who knew the artist in London, and sat to him three times, described the experience thus: 'Van Dyck told people what day and hour to arrive for a sitting, and he never worked more than one hour at a time on each portrait, whether it be to sketch or finish ... After making the next appointment for his client, van

Dyck's servant would clean his brushes, present the artist with another palette, and he would paint the next sitter for an hour.'

Van Dyck shows Sir William, who is attired in black, in a spirit of contemplative melancholy. This had become a fashionable mode of self-presentation, signifying not so much depression as intellectual seriousness. It was appropriate for a courtier who, as we know, had already written some poetry and was later to produce a number of plays – and, later still, to publish volumes of moral and religious reflections. Both the composition and the setting reveal van Dyck's own study of Italian painters, notably Titian, who had frequently included a column in the background of his male portraits to convey the status and worth of the sitter. He probably first used it in the three-quarter-length portrait of *Giacomo Doria*, dressed in black satin circa 1533–5 (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).

Lady Mary, on the other hand, gazes out at the viewer directly. By the late 1630s, van Dyck seems to have devised for his female portraits a less specifically fashionable form of dress. Clearly the prestige of being painted by him was such that his sitters were prepared to accept this. Lady Mary is shown in just such a gown – simplified, and minus the kind of richly textured lace that was so time-consuming to paint – and which thus becomes a 'timeless' version of contemporary dress. The border of her shift appears just above the edge of her deep red gown, both pulled low to reveal a luscious expanse of creamy breast. Again van Dyck has absorbed ideas from the Venetian painters: Titian's *Flora*, circa 1515-20 (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence), is a comparable image of a beautiful woman, perhaps in the role of Venus, golden hair trailing across her cheek, cream shift barely covering her breast and exposed shoulder, and roses held in one hand. Furthermore, Lady Mary's position behind a stone parapet is also paralleled in such works by Titian as his *Man with a Quilted Sleeve*, circa 1510 or his '*La Schiavona*' (the Dalmatian woman), circa 1510–12 (both National Gallery, London).

Van Dyck not only re-used motifs that he inherited from other portraitists but he also introduced new settings for his sitters. His most innovative ones, which first appear around 1630, were stark natural elements in the form of caves, boulders and cliffs, of the kind we see behind Lady Mary. In the emblem books of the period, bare rocks symbolised constancy.

Until recently, the blonde Lady Mary's portrait has sometimes been mis-identified as an image of her recently deceased sister-in-law, Cecelia Crofts. It is clear, however, from other sources that Cecelia was dark-haired and dark-eyed.

No other portrait of Sir William by van Dyck is known (though there is a later copy of the present work at the Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, USA). Mary herself was portrayed again by him, this time with her face in semi-profile, seated in a double friendship portrait alongside a lady traditionally but probably wrongly identified as Anne Villiers, Countess of Morton, later Lady Dalkeith (died 1654). The prime version of this is at Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire and another is at Wilton House, Wiltshire. Anne Villiers herself was painted by van Dyck in a solo half-length. Although this is now lost, we know what it looked like, both from painted copies and from the seventeenth-century engraving made after it by Pierre Lombart (National Portrait Gallery archive collection). Intriguingly, these show the brunette Anne Villiers at half-length, standing behind a parapet, her left hand resting by a pair of roses – a very similar composition to the present image of Lady Killigrew. As Sir Oliver Millar has pointed out, van Dyck seldom used the same posture for more than one sitter. Anne Villiers is, however, shown more conventionally dressed than Mary, a fur stole over one shoulder, and the print has her in front of a plain stone wall and a wholly different landscape. Which of the two ladies did van Dyck paint first? And did the other so admire her friend's image that she insisted on being portrayed in very similar style?

As the seventeenth-century painter and writer Bellori asserted, in his biographical notes on van Dyck published in 1672,' he had deservedly acquired the greatest name that any portraitist had merited since Titian. And in truth, besides capturing a likeness, he gave the heads a certain nobility and conferred grace on their actions' – a verdict with which we can wholly agree, as we admire the reunited portraits of Sir William and Lady Mary Killigrew.

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