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Edmund Spenser and Elizabethan portraiture

TARNYA COOPER AND ANDREW HADFIELD

Edmund Spenser (1554?–99), although his work is largely the preserve of specialists today, is a recognizable figure from the realms of English Literature from the mid-seventeenth century onwards. He is invariably depicted as a man with a ruff and a neatly clipped beard and, if shown in fuller profile, wearing the doublet and tights that were thought to have been *de rigeur* at Elizabeth's court. There is no particular distinction between the images produced for a scholarly audience and a more popular one. For example, the Ladybird book of *The First Queen Elizabeth* ('Adventures in History Series,' 1958), designed for young schoolchildren, represents Spenser in this manner, reading aloud to the queen and her courtiers. While they listen to his verse with appropriate respect, they are far more exited by the appearance on the next page of a 'far better poet', William Shakespeare.[1] Any scholarly work that represents Spenser's life has a portrait of him on the cover, one that is clearly recognisable as the same figure, and such generic images of Spenser as a quintessential Elizabethan are easy to find on the internet. The academy and the wider public have the same image of the poet.

However, as has long been recognized, it is hard to be sure if this image has any reflection in reality. Spenser's biographer, A. C. Judson, was uncertain whether any of the supposed images of his subject could be authenticated as a true likeness, and concluded that 'we should probably do well to content ourselves with the vivid impression of his personality conveyed by his works and create an image of him from our own fancy.'[2] When the Kinnoull Portrait, one of two images that were commonly assumed to be the most authentic likenesses of Spenser, was sold in 2005 the identity was not widely accepted.[3]

The story of the search for Spenser's portrait is worth telling, not simply because it is the tale of a problematic image of a major English writer. It also tells us a great deal about the nature and history of 'citizen portraiture' in early modern England, and about the subsequent desire to find authentic

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[1] L. Du Garde Peach, *The First Queen Elizabeth* (London: Wills and Hepworth, 1958).
[2] A. C. Judson, *The Life of Edmund Spenser* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1945), 210.
[3] http://www.bonhams.com/eur/auction/13394/lot/147/ (accessed September 2011).

images of famous people from earlier periods: in this case, writers. Often this apparently reasonable wish was at odds with the evidence surviving from an earlier period, but a collective need overrode any legitimate doubts. In this essay we will try to address these issues in thinking about the portraits of Spenser in terms of a wider discussion of author portraiture in early modern England. Section One will explore and analyse the surviving evidence of Elizabethan and Jacobean author portraiture; Section Two provides an overview of the putative Spenser portraits that survive today and is followed by a substantial conclusion.

I

Only a few poets and playwrights chose to include printed portraits in their published work. Many playwrights were, of course, more interested in theatrical performance than a written literary legacy, so their engraved portraits appeared when their plays were published posthumously (as with the engraved likeness of William Shakespeare that appeared in the First Folio in 1623). Nevertheless, no printed portrait of Spenser appeared alongside work published in his lifetime. But in the mid-seventeenth century an imaginary engraved portrait appeared alongside other portraits of writers on the title pages of John Cotgrave's survey of the written achievements of the English gentry, *Wits Interpreter, The English Parnassus*, 1655 (Fig. 1). The title page also includes thumbnail portraits of Geoffrey Chaucer, William Camden & Francis Bacon, and others, several of which are based on authentic known portraits of these sitters. The shadowy figure identified as Spenser shows a generic seventeenth-century long-haired man with a moustache, wearing costume from the 1640s. As this date is forty years after Spenser's death, it is clear that the likeness could not be based on an authentic image and that the motive was largely an illustrative device; simply a shorthand means to associate the work with some major literary figures. Another similar portrait also identified as Spenser was reproduced on the frontispiece to the second edition of Edward Phillips' *The New World of Words, or, A General English Dictionary* (1658).[4] This portrait was probably inspired by the earlier print and shows a more clearly rendered man between two pillars with the same long hair and moustache (Fig. 2), again as one portrait as part of an ensemble of other renowned writers.

   Where printed author portraits did appear during the writer's lifetime, they helped both to locate a literary persona with a fixed visual identity and served to increase the status of the writer as a man worthy of note, providing a

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[4] John Cotgrave, *Wits Interpreter, the English Parnassus, or, A sure guide to those admirable accomplishments that compleat our English gentry* (London, 1655); Edward Phillips, *The New World of Words, or, A General English Dictionary* (London, 1658). On Cotgrave (1611?–55?), see the *ODNB* entry by W. H. Kelliher. It is worth noting that some of the other portraits in the frontispiece to Phillips' dictionary, are based on real portraits, such as Camden, Chaucer and Bacon; others, notably Sidney, are clearly not.
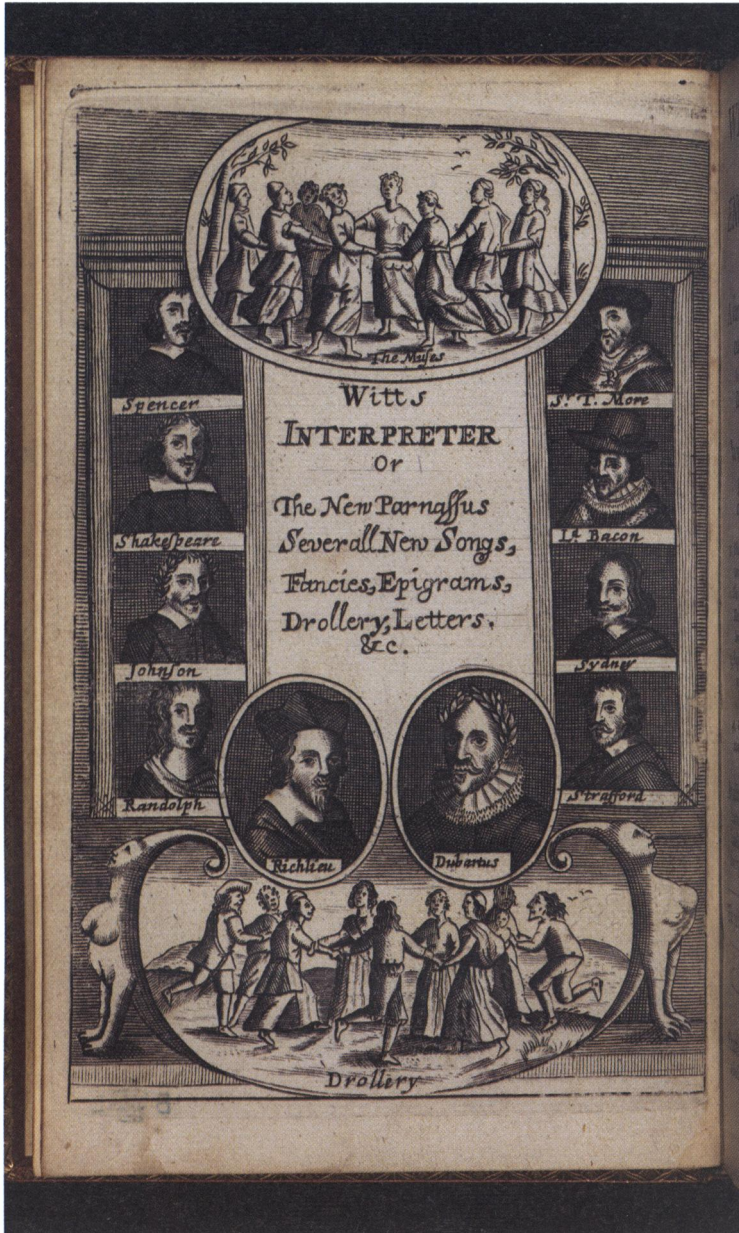
Fig. 1 Unknown English engraver, title pages of John Cotgrave's *Wits Interpreter, The English Parnassus*, 1655, engraving, British Library E.1448 © British Library

Fig. 2   Unknown English engraver, frontispiece to the first edition of Edward Phillips' *The New World of Words, or, A General English Dictionary*, 1658, engraving, British Library 1502/377 © British Library

Fig. 3   Attributed to William Hole or Holle (before 1600–24), *Portrait of George Chapman*, from *The Whole Works of Homer*, 1616, engraving, National Portrait Gallery, D2941 © National Portrait Gallery

'gentleman-like' context to the work.[5] At this early date, authors (or their publishers) were more inclined to include portraits within editions of their scholarly works (mainly, historical treatises) rather than alongside volumes of poetry or prose. A highly unusual portrait of George Chapman (1559/1560–1634) accompanied his translation of Homer published in 1616 (Fig. 3), yet it did not appear in his poetical works, or his published plays.[6] At this early date

[5] Sarah Howe has argued that printed author portraits were 'designed to allay the anxieties of the readers about publishers' interventions in printed texts', which may be particularly true of posthumous publications: 'The Authority of Presence: The Development of the English Author Portrait, 1500–1640', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, Vol. 102, No. 4 (2008), 465–99, at 469.

[6] Arthur M. Hind, *Engraving in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, Part 1: The Tudor Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), 316–40; Fredson Bowers (ed.), *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Vol. 62, *Elizabethan Dramatists* (Detroit MI: Gale, 1987), lxii, 5.

in the construction of authorial identity, it is possible to see that writers of poetry and plays felt better able to present themselves as worthy of public attention – and thus visible through portraiture – when reliant upon traditional scholarly pursuits. The inventive engraving of Chapman by William Hole (before 1600–24) is one of the artist's most technically accomplished works and the iconographic programme and inscribed text was probably conceived or designed by Chapman himself. The unusual format – placing Chapman's head among the clouds – may reflect his absorption in literary endeavours at the expense of worldly pursuits or social decorum, as the words '*Conscium Evasi Diem*' [I will escape the conscious day] upon the clouds might suggest.[7] Similarly, the engraved portrait of Samuel Daniel (Fig. 4) accompanied his major work *The Civil Wars*, 1609, but not his published poetry, suggesting that poetry might have been considered to have a lesser claim on public attention. Daniel was highly acclaimed in his own lifetime and, gained sustained patronage throughout his career, and after 1607 from Queen Anne, and it is perhaps for this reason that he felt confident enough to present himself as a gentleman poet. Indeed, it is interesting that his status as one of the 'Groomes of hir Maiesties most honorable Priuie Chamber' is inscribed on his engraved portrait as his principal claim for the right to public attention, rather than his credit and worth as a scholar, let alone as a poet or dramatist. Unlike Chapman and Daniel, Spenser did not publish any scholarly works and no printed portrait was produced in his lifetime. Nor was he close to the centres of power, spending most of his adult life in Ireland after travelling over as secretary to Arthur, Lord Grey de Wilton in 1580.

It is curious that literary portraits produced in this period have seldom been examined as objects within the contexts of their own artistic – or even biographical – narratives.[8] Perhaps this is because the functions of such portraits seem self-evident: part of their contemporary purpose was to confer a gentlemanly status and, perhaps to a lesser extent, champion the activity of literary endeavour. But do such portraits tell us anything more about literary ambition, an author's self-perception, or the reputations of individual writers in their own lifetime? It is worth remembering that painted oil portraits of private citizens usually had private or at least highly personal purposes, in that they were probably commissioned to be displayed in a domestic context and seen by a small number of close associates and family members. At the lower end of the

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[7] The inscription around the oval reads: 'GEORGIVS CHAPMANVS HOMERI METAPHRASTES AETA LVII. M.DC. XVI..'; outer rim top left: 'Hac est laurigeri faciies diuina Georgi' (This is the excellent portrait of George crowned with laurels); around the outer rim top right: 'Hic Phoebi Decus est; Phoebinuma Deus' (This is the divine face of Phoebus); in the clouds: 'CONSCIVM EVASI DIEM' (I have escaped the day consciously or I have escaped the conscious day'). See Tarnya Cooper (ed.), *Searching for Shakespeare* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2006), 190.

[8] A recent exception is: Stephen Orgel, 'Not on his picture but his book', *Times Literary Supplement*, 22 August 2003, 9, which explores author portraiture within the context of the biography of Philip Sidney, John Donne, Ben Jonson and others.

Fig. 4   Thomas Cockson or Coxon (active 1609–36), *Portrait of Samuel Daniel*, engraving, National Portrait Gallery, D27977 © National Portrait Gallery

scale a portrait could be purchased for between less than five shillings for a small scale picture, and around ten shillings for a half length (roughly the cost of a Bible) and thus portraiture was within the reach of many members of the middling sort who were concerned enough to sit for their likeness.[9] It is clear

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[9] The prices charged for painted portraits varied enormously dependent on the status of the artist and patron, size of the painting, the extent of complex decorative design (for example found in costume) or the use

that many of these modest, reasonably inexpensive portraits of Tudor and Jacobean middling sort once existed and many must have perished over time.[10] Certainly some portraits were discarded when they fell into disrepair (a common occurrence as most paintings on wooden panels require occasional restoration to stabilize paint losses partly caused by the wet climate in the British Isles), while others would undoubtedly have been lost in the fire of London in 1666, as happened to several portraits depicting the author and antiquarian William Camden (1551–1623).[11]

However, not all men of Camden's status would have commissioned portraits. To some, the concept of commissioning a portrait would probably have been considered an unnecessary expense, pretentious, or personally intrusive. Consequently, considerable caution is needed in identifying possible portraits and it is likely that the identities of some portraits of writers (including Shakespeare) will always remain contentious.[12] The existence of numerous portraits of Camden might be accounted for by the fact that his father was a painter-stainer, making him a relatively unusual case. Conversely, many men of his status, probably like Edmund Spenser, who had no obvious connection to visual artists, may not have felt the need to have sat for a portrait at all.

In the later sixteenth century, painters were gaining commissions for portraits of members of the urban elite, such as merchants, lawyers and occasionally others of wit and talent. Unlike portraits of courtiers, or indeed other categories of middle elites (such as wealthy merchants who became institutional benefactors) very few portraits of professional authors appear to have entered institutional collections such as those of the guild companies or universities, and thus often very little can be traced concerning their provenance.[13] Only a very small number of painted oil portraits of professional authors, and, less frequently, actors, survive from this period. Indeed, only two identified portraits depicting John Donne (Fig. 5) and Michael Drayton (Fig. 6) date from the 1590s, when any supposed portrait of Edmund Spenser might have been painted. Critically, the evidence for a sub-genre of literary

costly pigments or materials. Some commissions for royal and noble portraits could cost as much as £13. See Robert Tittler, *The Face of the City Civic Portraiture and Civic Identity in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), Appendix B, 187.

[10] Cooper, *Citizen Portraiture.*

[11] Most sixteenth- and seventeenth-century oil paintings on panel shown evidence of several different campaigns of restoration, indicating an enduring historical interest in the survival of the picture; many others must have been discarded. William Camden and Thomas Smith, *V cl, Gulielmi Camdeni . . .* (London, 1691), lxx-lxxii.

[12] Cooper (ed.), *Searching for Shakespeare*, 33–43.

[13] An exception is the collection at Dulwich Picture Gallery, which harbours part of the collection of Edward Alleyn and William Cartwright dating from the early seventeenth century. See Nicola Kalinsky and Giles Waterfield, *Mr Cartwright's Pictures: A Seventeenth Century Collections* (Dulwich Picture Gallery, 1988).

Fig. 5   Unknown English artist, *Portrait of John Donne*, *c.* 1595, oil on panel, National Portrait Gallery, 6790 © National Portrait Gallery

portraiture develops after Spenser's death, in the first and second decades of the seventeenth century.

The problem of securely identifying sitters as authors or professional writers when depicted in easel paintings is acute. Of the existing portraits of known Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights, none can be directly identified by original inscriptions naming the sitter. Instead, identities can be indicated on the basis of provenance or likeness to other portraits (usually engraved images) and occasionally this can be corroborated by inscriptions relating to the age of a sitter, as in the case of Michael Drayton (Fig. 6). The prominence of poets and playwrights in national narratives of British history has meant that the search for portraits of famous authors has long been a pastime of enthusiastic amateurs. Such researchers have often been motivated by the desire to enhance the reputation of a beloved poet, claim the glory of identification or to increase the market value of a particular picture of an unknown man. From the late seventeenth century to the present day, numerous sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century portraits of otherwise unknown men – often noticeably handsome and glamorous – were, and still continue to be, identified as

Fig. 6   Unknown English artist, *Portrait of Michael Drayton*, dated 1599, oil on panel, National Portrait Gallery, 776 © National Portrait Gallery

Shakespeare, Spenser, Jonson or others.[14] In the mind of such an enthusiast, the longing to meet the face of a favourite author can overwhelm the lack of art historical evidence, or even decisive evidence to the contrary concerning the date of the portrait, or appearance of the sitter. Often the assumption made is that because portraits of writers existed from later periods, they must have done so earlier, so that any gaps in our knowledge can be explained because portraits have not been correctly identified.

It is true that from the 1590s onwards the reputation and professional standing of writers was beginning to be championed in some influential quarters. However, whether university trained or not, professional authors often eked out a precarious existence as freelance poets, playwrights and writers for hire. They were reliant on the vagaries of royal or noble patronage,

[14] A significant number of portraits have previously been identified as writers such as Shakespeare, Jonson and Spenser (see National Portrait Gallery Archive, Sitters Boxes). Many are original seventeenth-century portraits of other sitters while a larger number are later versions of established/identified portraits.

or upon the changing needs of theatre owners for novel entertainment. Many writers like George Chapman and Michael Drayton struggled to make a living, while Nathan Field was imprisoned for debt. Certainly, very few professional writers died wealthy and those that did manage to achieve moderate financial security – such as Jonson, Shakespeare and Spenser – often did so as a result of property and business interests, or through court patronage as Samuel Daniel did, rather than directly through their writing. The publication of the *Wit's Treasury* by Francis Meres in 1598 includes a short but significant commentary on the work and reputations of Elizabethan writers. As such, it offers a snapshot of opinions at a particular moment, before writers like Jonson and Shakespeare had published their most significant work. Meres had set himself the task of a celebratory description and he attempted to find classical and modern Italian parallels in his commentary on English poetry. He described English poets as 'our famous and learned lawreat masters of Engla[n]d' and he began by praising 'auncient' English poets, 'Chaucer, Gower and Lydgate'. His text is particularly interesting in that it provides a list of specific examples of contemporary writers, some of whom he probably knew, and others about whom he repeated local opinions, hearsay and gossip. He makes no distinction between courtier poets and professional writers and lists 'Sir Philip Sidney, Spencer, Daniel, Drayton, Warner, Shakespeare, Marlow and Chapman' as men whose 'rare ornaments' have 'mightly enriched' the English tongue.[15] The reputations of these men were principally based on their poetry rather than their plays, as drama for public entertainment was still widely considered to be hack work.[16]

   Like all aspiring Elizabethan men of wit and talent, the personal reputation of a writer was bound to self-presentation. In order to appear at court and show themselves as worthy of noble patronage they needed to be able to present themselves in a decent suit of clothes befitting a gentleman, which required a considerable financial investment. The surviving evidence from identified portraits of writers makes it clear that in the period up until around 1620 most authors wore relatively sober but smart clothes: often a black or dark coloured doublet with a falling band or collar as seen in the portraits of Ben Jonson (Fig. 7) William Shakespeare (?) (Fig. 8) and Samuel Daniel (Fig. 4). Others such as Donne (Fig. 5), Drayton (Fig. 6) and Shakespeare's Collaborator John Fletcher (Fig. 9) wear slightly more elaborate collars or ruffs. It is clear that a type of portraiture that emphasized the singularity or ingenuity of the sitter became associated with dramatists, poets or those associated with the theatre in the very late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Most of these surviving portraits are modest in scale, which would have ensured a reasonably low cost. These sitters also rarely make use of any

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[15] Francis Meres, *Wit's Treasury* (London, 1598), fols. 278r–281v.

[16] For discussion of conceptions of authorship, see Kevin Pask, *The Emergence of the English Author: Scripting the Life of the Poet in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Stephen B. Dobranski, *Readers and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Fig. 7   Abraham van Blyenberch or Blijenberch (1575/6–1624), *Portrait of Ben Jonson, c.* 1617, oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, 2752 © National Portrait Gallery

inscriptions, attributes or other features to distract the viewer. In contrast to other portraits of this period, portraits of writers rarely attempt to impress the viewer with the sitter's credentials (that is, via coats of arms, inscriptions, and elaborate accessories) nor do they make statements about status, or champion the virtues of charity, piety, or humility. Instead, they focus principally on the sitter's features, set against a foil of a plain background and reasonably modest attire. Consequently, as an image of an individual they present a powerful sense of self-awareness. The simplicity of these portraits allows the gaze of the viewer to focuses on the face alone, and thus the portrait becomes about the intrinsic worth, originality and ingenuity of the individual portrayed.

What little we know of Spenser suggests that he fits into this pattern of writerly self-presentation. John Aubrey (1626–97), whose *Brief Lives* remained in manuscript until 1813, is the only writer to provide any details of Spenser's appearance, commenting that 'Mr Beeston sayes, he was a little man, wore shorte haire, little band and little cuffs.'[17] The description is not especially vivid or helpful and probably reached Aubrey at one remove, the Mr Beeston being William (1610/11?–82), son of the impresario and actor manager,

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[17] *Aubrey's Brief Lives*, ed. Oliver Lawson Dick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962, repr. of 1949), 340.
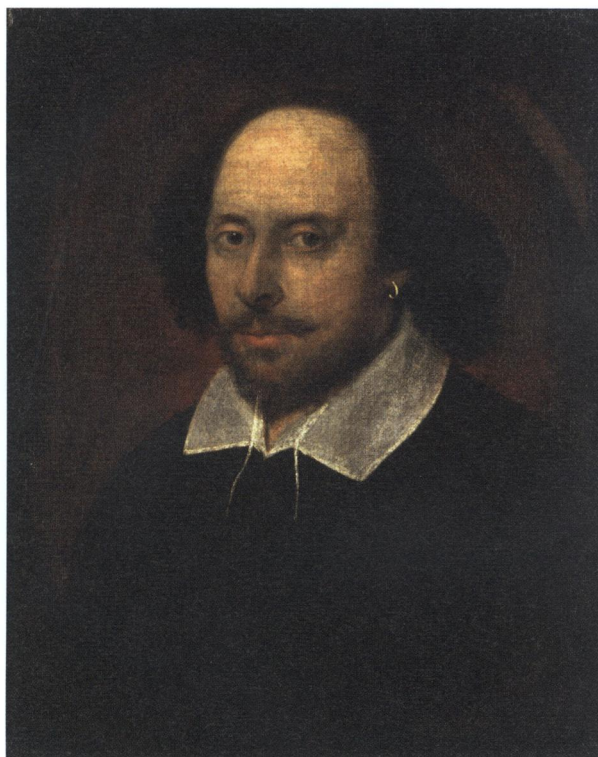
Fig. 8 Attributed to John Taylor (d.1651), *Portrait of William Shakespeare?*, known as the *Chandos Portrait*, oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, 1 © National Portrait Gallery

Christopher (1579/80? –1638), who could have seen Spenser in London but died when Aubrey was thirteen.[18] Nevertheless, the short sketch may be of significance in helping us determine what Spenser looked like, what social role he assumed, and, possibly, clarifying the relationship with previously identified portraits, as it suggests that Spenser was a man of modest appearance. It is clear that he was not a flamboyant courtier, as he is often imagined to have been, but habitually wore the clothes of the middling sort, and kept his hair short. The detail of the 'little band' (a small collar) is perhaps especially significant and suggests that Spenser was known to appear in the relatively simple and sober dress that other writers wore when they had their portraits painted in the early seventeenth century, as for example with Jonson (Fig. 7) and Shakespeare (Fig. 8).

A portrait recently re-identified as Michael Drayton provides more evidence about the emerging consciousness of writers and their desire to be recognized

[18] See Judson, *Life*, 208, n. 19. On the Beestons see the *ODNB* lives by Andrew Gurr.

Fig. 9   Unknown English artist, *Portrait of John Fletcher, c.* 1620, oil on panel, National Portrait Gallery, 6829
© National Portrait Gallery

in particular ways that celebrate invention, ingenuity and the art of poetry. Following recent technical analysis a portrait depicting an English poet wearing a laurel wreath has been authenticated as a late sixteenth-century picture. The portrait can now be reasonably securely re-identified as the poet and playwright Michael Drayton showing him in his thirty-sixth year in 1599 (Fig. 6). The laurel crown had associations with ancient victories but was employed in Renaissance portraiture to herald literary and artistic achievement, and this image is one of the earliest examples of a living English laureate portrait. The facial likeness in this portrait corresponds well with another identified portrait of Drayton at Dulwich Picture Gallery, dated 1628, which served as the model for his bust in Westminster Abbey. Drayton collaborated with Thomas Dekker, Anthony Munday and others, and like Shakespeare he came from relatively humble origins in Warwickshire; his father was either a tanner or a butcher. By the late 1590s he had become an established poet and playwright and styled himself as a 'gentleman'. Under Elizabeth I no official position of Poet Laureate existed, but Spenser had unofficially fulfilled this role and had gained a pension of £50

a year from the Queen.[19] On Spenser's death in January 1599, Drayton would certainly have been a candidate for any potential role as a Poet Laureate and this image may well have been a means to style himself as suitably eligible of royal patronage. However, no replacement appointment was made, and following Elizabeth's death Drayton also failed to gain approval from the new king James I. Yet in spite of this, other later portraits also show him wearing a laurel wreath (including an engraving of 1613 and the Dulwich Picture Gallery portrait of 1628), indicating that he was particularly attached to a sense of himself as a celebrated bard.[20]

Ben Jonson's rather modest portrait by the supremely talented Netherlandish painter Abraham van Blyenberch (1575/6–1624), dated around 1617 (Fig. 7) presents a far simpler appearance than Drayton. Jonson is shown wearing a black doublet with a simple falling collar with the strings hanging down at the neck (costume which is very similar to the Chandos portrait of Shakespeare). His so called 'rockye face' is extremely well characterized and the portrait offers no pretensions, but instead presents just a boldly conceived facial likeness. Indeed, the portrait has a very good claim to be painted from life. For a contemporary audience the portrait's purpose was to demonstrate the remarkable character and ingenuity of the sitter – located not through dress or inscriptions as in courtly portraiture – but as found in the observation of a serious expression upon the face of a man with the apparent capacity for both sharp wit and hearty amusement. However, the fact that this portrait is by an artist who appears to have worked principally for courtly patrons is telling. It is worth remembering that Jonson was one of the most celebrated literary figures of his age and arguably, his success and reputation exceeded that of Shakespeare. As the reputations and social standing of professional poets and playwrights began to change in the Jacobean period, there is evidence that their portraits became collectable among their patrons. For example, as Catherine MacLeod has noted, this portrait of Jonson appears to have been owned by the Duke of Buckingham who, given the use of the Netherlandish artist Blyenberch, is perhaps likely to have commissioned it to hang among his large portrait collection.[21]

The portrait of Nathan Field (1587–1619/1620) dates from around 1615 and shows him in a rather casual pose, wearing an embroidered blackwork shirt open at the neck to reveal his chest (Fig. 10). There is an artful informality to this image that might indicate the painting was for a private audience, possibly a personal patron or his own intimate circle. Field was both a playwright and an actor, and wrote at least eight plays, many in collaboration, but he was

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[19] Herbert Berry and E. K. Timings, 'Spenser's Pension', *Review of English Studies*, ns, 11 (1960), 254–9.
[20] The engraving is by William Hole; see Hind *Engraving in England*, ii, Pl. 196. The miniature is attributed to Peter Oliver: see Richard W. Goulding, *A Catalogue Raisonné: The Welbeck Abbey Miniatures belonging to the Duke of Portland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1916), 74–5.
[21] Catherine MacLeod, catalogue entry on the portrait of 'Ben Jonson', in Cooper (ed.), *Searching for Shakespeare*, 180, n. 83.

Fig. 10   Unknown English artist, *Portrait of Nathan Field*, *c.* 1615, oil on canvas, Dulwich Picture Gallery (DPG 385) © Dulwich Picture Gallery

occasionally troubled by debt and the cost of a portrait (even if only of around ten shillings) would still have been a notable outlay if he commissioned it himself. The gesture of holding his hand to his heart is might be described as a type of self-avowal, and is also occasionally found in artists' self-portraits and other portraits of writers. Bulwer's *Chirologia or the natural language of the hand*, a book on gesture published in 1644, indicates that this pose was designed to signify as an affirmation or 'a swear or call to God to witness truth' and thus exhibiting a 'testimony of our conscience or take a tactile oath'. Thus it is possible that the poses refer to the idea of bearing witness or testifying facts (such as the authorship of text or simply a recommendation of one's own virtue). The sitter is shown within a false oval niche, as if designed to hang within an architectural scheme, perhaps even alongside other portraits, as portrait sets of various types were becoming popular at this period.

   Several unidentified portraits of men whose clothes and pose appear to indicate they may be literary sitters, or men who wished to be associated with

Fig. 11   Unknown English artist, *Portrait of an unknown man in profile within a feigned oval*, *c.* 1600, oil on panel, whereabouts unknown (National Portrait Gallery archive, costume boxes) © National Portrait Gallery

literary culture, date from the 1590s or early 1600s.[22] A key example of such a portrait which is particularly close in format and pose to the portrait of John Donne (Fig. 5) shows an unknown man posed in profile within a feigned oval wearing an opened necked shirt (Fig. 11).[23] Like Donne he holds his black cloak wrapped defensively around his body in a theatrical manner of a malcontent.[24] It seems likely the sitter may be a poet or perhaps a literary patron or professional man associated with the theatre. Further investigation into this

[22] Other examples of this type not considered here are: Unknown English School, '*Portrait of an Unknown man called the Earl of Essex*', *c.*1590–95, sold at Sotheby's, November 1975, lot 45; Attributted to Gheeraerts, Sir Henry Wotton?, dated 1600, sold at Sotheby's, 23 April 1941, lot 153. See National Portrait Gallery Archive.

[23] The current location of this portrait is unknown. It was sold at Christie's, 22 March 1968, lot 81 when it was described as a '*Portrait of a Gentleman*, half length, in white shirt with red and black cloak in a painted oval, on panel, 29 ½ in. by 24 in'.

[24] Lawrence Babb's comprehensive review of the appearance of the malcontent in Elizabethan literature argues that the affectation of melancholy was supposed to suggest 'literary ability'. By citing the many examples of such characters found in drama, Babb indicates that the melancholic was often described as 'black suited and disheveled' and that he was often posed with his arms crossed and his hat pulled down (without a hatband), often with a long cloak (as in the portrait of Donne): *The Elizabethan Malady: A Study of Melancholia in English Literature from 1580 to 1642* (East Lansing MI: Michigan State College Press, 1951), 73–101.

picture is needed, and its whereabouts are currently unknown, but its exist-
ence (and others like it) indicates that there may have been a small sub-genre
of portraits of this type depicting men with poetic ambitions.[25]

A shared informality, telling of artfully constructed neglect, seems to
connect these portraits to those of John Donne and Nathan Field (Figs. 5 and
10). In contrast to court, merchant and professional portraiture, many of
these paintings are reasonably modest in format and often show sitters
wearing simple or informal costume (often just with shirt sleeves and without
a doublet) and with no or few accessories. These portraits also seem to
represent a specific type of individual with a heightened self-awareness as
indicated by an outward gaze and the contrived nature of the pose. The
informality may also indicate that they were painted for a limited private
audience who had a personal relationship with the sitter. Some are in an oval
format, a type of presentational device – which at this early date – had a direct
relationship to painted miniatures, which were themselves largely for private
consumption.

If a picture of Spenser does survive, we should expect it to resemble those
of other writers whose portraits were painted. He would have been portrayed
in ordinary and sober attire, or perhaps much less likely as as a man of
distracted appearance, indicating that his muse mattered more than social
propriety. However, the surviving portraits that have been put forward as
likenesses of Spenser fit into none of these categories.

II

SUPPOSED PORTRAITS OF EDMUND SPENSER

The first portrait of Spenser appeared soon after the publication of Jacob
Tonson's (1655/6–1736) edition of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* in 1715, nearly a
hundred and twenty years after the poet's death, when the painter, George
Vertue (1684–1756) claimed to have discovered one in 1719 in the possession
of John Guise (1682/3–1765).[26] Guise left his collection of 250 paintings to
Christ Church College, Oxford, but there is no record of any being of
Spenser.[27] Vertue made what may have been a copy in 1727, which is of
the same type later identified as the 'Chesterfield' portrait of Spenser at
Pembroke College Oxford, (Fig. 12) which dates from the eighteenth

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[25] Other examples of similar portraits are discussed in Cooper, *Citizen Portrait.*

[26] George Vertue, *Notebooks*, ed. K. Esdaile, Earl of Ilchester and H. M. Hake, 6 vols., *Walpole Society*, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 30 (1930–55), XVIII, 25, 58.

[27] 'There was no painting in Guise's collection when it came to Christ Church College, Oxford, that was identified to be Spenser. Guise seems to have changed his collection quite a lot over the years and many of the paintings mentioned by Vertue were not in the collection anymore by the time it was bequeathed to Christ Church in 1765. It would also have been an unusual painting for Guise to have (or hold on to) as his interest as a collector were Italian old masters (very little portraiture). Should a portrait of Spenser have been in his collection it would have been not unlikely that he would have sold it to 'streamline' his collection' (personal communication from Jacqueline Thalmann (Curator. Picture Gallery, Christ Church, Oxford).
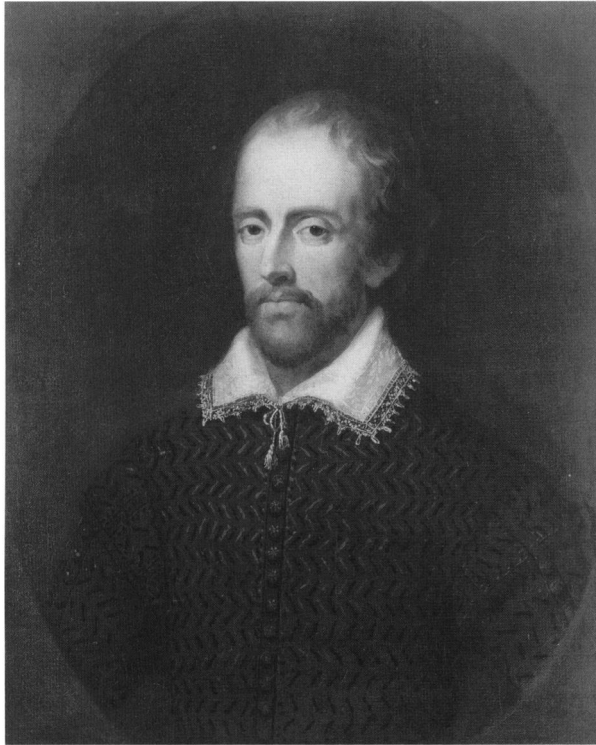
Fig. 12 Benjamin Wilson (1721–88), *Portrait of Edmund Spenser*, known as 'Oxford/Chesterfield' type, *c.* 1770s, oil on canvas, Pembroke College, Oxford © Pembroke College Oxford

century.[28] The inscription on Vertue's engraving of the 'Chesterfield' portrait (Fig. 13) notes that the original portrait was then in the collection of John Guise, so may have based it on a portrait which is now lost or missing. In fact, it is clear that all the surviving versions are later seventeenth century or even eighteenth century in origin. Therefore, it is probable that no original ever existed, but instead that the portrait type is a seventeenth-century fabrication, perhaps like that of the so-called 'Soest' portrait of Shakespeare which dates from *circa* 1667 showing Shakespeare as a handsome and notably romantic

[28] This version, painted by Benjamin Wilson (1721–88), was given to Pembroke College by William Mason (1725–97) in 1771, the year his great friend, another fellow of the college, Thomas Gray, died. See Aubrey Attwater, *A Short History of Pembroke College, Cambridge* (Cambridge; Pembroke College, 1973, repr. of 1936), 102. On Benjamin Wilson and William Mason, see the *ODNB* articles by E. I. Carlyle (the Rev. John A. Hargreaves) and Jules Smith. Several copies of this type of portrait of Spenser exist, notably at Sterling Library, University of London. For a longer list of copies of the Chesterfield portrait, see Freeman O'Donoghue, *Catalogue of Engraved British Portraits Preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum*, 6 vols. (London: British Museum, 1908–25), IV, 166–7.

Fig. 13   George Vertue (1683–1756), *Portrait of Edmund Spenser*, dated 1727, engraving, National Portrait Gallery, D9355 © National Portrait Gallery

figure.[29] Moreover, the style of dress (particularly the doublet with wide shoulder guards) dates from *circa* 1615–20 which clearly indicates that the original could not have been produced during Spenser's lifetime. Therefore, the portrait type was either based upon a portrait of a Jacobean man whose likeness became associated with Spenser at an early date, or was an invented portrait to create a suitably sensitive portrait of Spenser at an opportune moment.[30] Indeed, the timing of the discovery of the 'Chesterfield' portrait type has long been considered suspicious. David Piper argued that the

[29] Cooper (ed.), *Searching for Shakespeare*, 70–1.
[30] Judson, *Life of Edmund Spenser*, 208–9.

relationship of the picture 'to Spenser himself remains doubtful – not only because of its late emergence, but because of the clash of inscriptions of date and age that the versions bear'.[31]

The desire to find a picture of Spenser was clearly acute in the early eighteenth century, fuelled no doubt by Jacob Tonson's own interest in the subject. Tonson, who almost single-handedly changed the nature of publishing by producing quality editions of the finest authors of his age to help bestow dignity upon the writing profession, had himself portrayed holding his own volume of Milton by Sir Godfrey Kneller.[32] Along with Sir John Somers (1646–1723), he helped to revitalize Spenser's reputation through publishing finely produced editions of his poetry.[33] Tonson dedicated his edition of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* to Somers, who was then painted by Kneller for the Kit-Cat Club holding the book in 1715 or 1716, as soon as it appeared.[34] The Kit-Cat Club, named after the mutton pies of Christopher Catling, which the group of artists, writers, intellectuals and politicians who met in central London taverns to discuss matters of importance, consumed during their meetings, had been founded by Tonson and other intellectual Whigs eager to use their influence to transform the cultural politics of the nation. They held Spenser, seen as a Protestant Whig poet, in especially high regard. Tonson's edition of Spenser did not include a picture of the poet, but showed a group of gentlemen and ladies staring avidly at Spenser's tomb in Westminster Abbey, a sign of his growing celebrity in the period and the need to have tangible remains of the famous. More significantly, the image functions as a substitute for a portrait, a reminder that Spenser had a real existence. This lack undoubtedly fuelled the need to find a portrait of the poet, especially as ones of Milton were relatively easy to procure. We should probably not be surprised that a portrait turned up soon after Tonson's edition, especially as it was found by the antiquarian George Vertue, who was close to the family of one of the central members of the club, Robert Walpole (1676–1745), whose son, Horace (1717–97), purchased many of his pictures.[35]

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[31] David Piper, 'The Chesterfield House Library Portraits', in René Wellek and Alvaro Ribeiro (eds.), *Evidence in Literary Scholarship: Essays in memory of James Marshall Osborn* (Oxford: Clarnedon Press, 1979), 179–95, at 187. On Vertue, see *ODNB* entry by Martin Myrone; Alexander C. Judson, 'The Eighteenth-Century Lives of Spenser', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 16 (1953), 161–81, at 164–8. The Director of the National Portrait Gallery, Sir Henry Hake, advised both Alexander Judson and Lord Ilchester, who had both asked for his advice, against trusting Vertue as a reliable source (letters 10 Sept. (to Ilchester) and 6 Oct. (to Judson), 1948) (Spenser files, National Portrait Gallery).

[32] *ODNB* entry by Raymond N. MacKenzie; Ophelia Field, *The Kit-Cat Club* (London: HarperCollins, 2009), 12–3. On Vertue's links to the Kit-Kat Club and Kneller, see Brian Cowman, 'An Open Elite: The Peculiarities of Connoisseurship in Early Modern England,' *Modern Intellectual History* 1 (2004), 151–83, at 177.

[33] Field, *Kit-Cat Club*, 262–3.

[34] John Somers, Baron Somers by Sir Godfrey Kneller, Bt. (1715–6), National Portrait Gallery 3223.

[35] See the *ODNB* entry on Horace Walpole by Paul Langford; J. H. Plumb, *Sir Robert Walpole: The Making of a Statesman* (London: Cresset, 1956), 115. Betty Kemp points out that Vertue visited the Walpole family home and commented on its decor, designed by William Kent: *Sir Robert Walpole* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), 67–8.

Fig. 14   Unknown English artist, *The 'Kinnoull' called Edmund Spenser*, c. 1600, oil on panel, current location unknown (with the dealer Roy Davids 1991) © Henitz Archive and Library, National Portrait Gallery

The first biographer to be able to locate a portrait of Spenser was Thomas Birch, author of a substantial life as a preface to his 1751 edition of the *Works*. Birch declares that 'An original picture of him is still in being, in the neighbourhood of his seat, at Castle-Saffron [just east of Doneraile], the House of JOHN Love, Esq' (xviii). A letter published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in March 1818 confirms that the picture was removed at some point in the late eighteenth century.[36] It has never been recovered and we have no knowledge of whether Mr Love had a copy of an existing portrait or a new one that has now been lost.

In 1776 the discovery of another supposed likeness of Spenser was announced by the traveller, Thomas Pennant (1726–98), when he visited Dupplin Castle, near Perth. This was the Kinnoull Portrait, (Fig. 14) named after the earls who then owned the estate. There was no obviously immediate reason for a picture of Spenser to emerge at this time, as there had been in the aftermath of the Tonson edition, but it is worth noting that Spenser's role as the inspiration behind the Gothic revival of the later eighteenth century had

[36] H. M., Letter, 4 Feb. 1818, *Gentleman's Magazine* 88 (Jan.–June, 1818), 224.

been cemented by the publication of William Kent's startling illustrations in Birch's edition of *The Faerie Queene* (1751) and, immediately before that, James Thomson's Spenserian tale, *The Castle of Indolence* (1748).[37] Spenser was more popular in the second half of the eighteenth century than he had been at any time before, his work – in particular *The Faerie Queene* – appealing to Augustans and Romantics alike.[38] The general desire to find images of him was even more acute than it had been earlier in the century.[39]

The Kinnoull Portrait shows a man in his middling years wearing a white ruff edged with fine lace and a black cloak in a three-quarter pose facing right. The ruff comfortably dates from the first decade of the seventeenth century, but could conceivably be very late 1590s. The authors have not been able to examine the original, but the painting may date from around 1600. The identification of Spenser– rather than any other well-to-do member of the middling sort or gentry lacks any evidential basis, other than tradition, and the elaborate lace ruff would seem to indicate a wealthier sitter.[40]

There is also little to be said for another work, known as the Fitzhardinge Miniature (not illustrated), once attributed to Nicholas Hilliard, but clearly not his work. Not much is known about the provenance of this portrait and the costume also seems to indicate an early seventeenth-century date and thus it is impossible that it could represent Spenser.[41] Certainly, the two simple linear engraved figures showing a sitter in 1640s costume on the title pages of the printed books by John Cotgrave and Edward Philips (Figs. 1 & 2) suggest that the publisher or artist had trouble sourcing a likeness of Spenser in the middle of the seventeenth century on which to base a portrait. Put another way, these pictures testify to the absence of an image of Spenser in the decades after his death. Birch does not state which portrait was discovered at Castle Saffron and we do not know its location now.[42] Attempts to track this portrait down in the early nineteenth century proved fruitless. There is a record of another portrait

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[37] Andrew Hadfield, 'William Kent's Illustrations of *The Faerie Queene* (1751)', *Sp. St.* XIV (2000), 1–81.

[38] David Hill Radcliffe, *Edmund Spenser: A Reception History* (Columbia SC: Camden House, 1996), Ch. 4; Jewel Wurtsbaugh, *Two Centuries of Spenserian Scholarship (1609–1805)* (Port Washington: Kennikat, 1970, repr. of 1936), Ch. 4.

[39] Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland; MDCCLXIX* (London, 1776), 85. The edition in which the details are announced is the fourth, the first having been published in 1772; Piper, 'Chesterfield House Portraits', 187; Spenser files, National Portrait Gallery. On Thomas Pennant, see the *ODNB* entry by Charles W. J. Withers.

[40] On ruffs and hairstyles, see Jeffrey L., Singman, *Daily Life in Elizabethan England* (London: Greenwood, 1995), 104–9.

[41] Samuel Redgrave (ed.), *Catalogue of the Special Exhibition of Portrait Miniatures On Loan at The South Kensington Museum, June 1865* (London: Whittingham and Wilkins, 1865), 133; Judson, *Life*, 210. Other attributions in the Fitzhardinge collection also look fanciful: item 1476 states, 'Portrait, called Queen Elizabeth, but most probably that of Anne of Denmark, Queen of James I.'

[42] On the history of a portrait surviving in Spenser's family in Ireland, see W. H. Welply, 'Edmund Spenser: Being an Account of Some Recent Researches into His Life and Lineage, with Some Notice of His Family and Descendants'. *Notes & Queries* 162 (1932): 128–32, 146–50, 165–9, 182–7, 202–06, 220–24, 239–42, 256–60, 241–2. There are other spurious relics of Spenser's life in Ireland 'discovered' in the early eighteenth century, indicating an appetite for material connected to the poet: see, for example, the clearly faked *A Canto of The Faerie Queene written by Spenser never before published* (1738).

in the possession of Edmund Spenser the third, the great-great-grandson of the poet, which was in the possession of a Mrs Sherlock, his granddaughter. This has also disappeared.[43] An exchange between interested parties in 1850–51 led to a correspondent, 'Varro', to claim that he was 'well acquainted with an admirable portrait of the poet, bearing the date 1593, in which he is represented as a man of not more than middle age'[44] When challenged to produce his evidence by the original correspondent, 'E. M. B.,' he failed to reply, but it could have been a version of either the Chesterfield or the Kinnoull portrait or another unknown portrait with further dates added for authenticity.[45] The exchange further reveals the history of uncertainty surrounding portraits of Spenser and the lack of confidence that a true likeness of him ever existed.

There are some later portraits but these are all oddities. A small canvas in the Plimpton collection at Columbia University, with the name 'Spencer' written beside the head and shoulders of the figure, is clearly a crude work based on the Chesterfield portrait, showing the poet at a slightly younger age. It was probably painted in the early nineteenth century.[46] Another, a mid-Victorian engraving shows Spenser greeting Shakespeare, each bowing with great formal reverence to the other, part of a general effort of the nineteenth-century imagination to think of the great writers of Elizabethan England in productive conversation with each other.[47] As well as Shakespeare, Spenser is most commonly imagined in conversation with Sir Walter Raleigh, as in the charming print in H. E. Marshall's *English Literature for Boys and Girls* (Fig. 15).[48] This follows a tradition that developed, in which Spenser is represented as a small man with a neat beard, resembling the figure in the Chesterfield portrait rather than the more angular-featured man in the Kinnoul Portrait. Clearly, while amusing, these nineteenth-century narrative scenes have no basis in fact, although the portrait type is vaguely in keeping with John Aubrey's description (the most authentic we have) of Spenser as 'a little man, wore shorte haire, little band and little cuffs'.

III

Although images of Edmund Spenser are regularly reproduced and there is a general consensus that he was a small, thin, rather haughty looking man with a neatly trimmed beard, there is no verifiable portrait of the author of the *Faerie Queene*. Nor do any pictures of his wives and descendants survive. This

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[43] W. H. Welply, 'Spenser: an Account of Some Recent Researches,' 241.

[44] Varro, 'Spenser's Age at His Death,' *Notes & Queries*, 1st Series IV (1851), 74.

[45] E. M. B., ''Spenser's Monument,' *Notes & Queries*, 1st Series, I (1850), 481–2; E. M. B., 'Portraits of Spenser,' *Notes & Queries*, 1st Series, III (1851), 301; E. M. B., 'Spenser's Portrait,' *Notes & Queries*, 1st Series IV (1851), 101.

[46] Alexander C. Judson, 'Another Spenser Portrait', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 6 (1943), 203–04.

[47] Henry Wallis (d. 1864), *Shakespeare and Spenser*, sold Sotheby's, 10.04.73, lot 192.

[48] H. E. Marshall, *English Literature for Boys and Girls* (London: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1910), opposite 252.

Fig. 15　Unknown artist, *Edmund Spenser and Sir Walter Ralegh*, in H. E. Marshall's *English Literature for Boys and Girls*, London: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1910), plate between 252 and 253 © Lebrecht Photo Library

should not really surprise us too much, as there are no reliable images of many of his contemporaries. We have no real idea what Thomas Deloney, Robert Greene, Gabriel Harvey, Thomas Lodge, Christopher Marlowe (arguably), Thomas Middleton, Thomas Nashe, Robert Southwell, and John Webster looked like. In cases of Elizabethan professional writers, there is a conspicuous scarcity of lifetime likeness: for example, the only authentic lifetime portrait of John Dee appears in a small manuscript, while the surviving oil portrait is a

later seventeenth-century copy.[49] However, all too often it is thought that we have – or should have – faithful images of writers, often based on a few significant but atypical cases, most notably the portraits of John Donne and Michael Drayton painted in the 1590s. The assumption invariably made is that because writers were often painted in the first part of the seventeenth century, their earlier counterparts and their patrons must have had similar needs and desires to preserve likenesses and access to portrait painters.

But how certain is the visual evidence that we have? How keen were writers to leave their likeness for posterity? The absence of a reliable portrait of Spenser is not simply a gap in the visual archive, but an index of what we do – and do not – have which merits further investigation. As is so often the case, pieces of evidence have been severed from their context, distorting their significance and running the risk of rendering what we have misleading, or even meaningless. This article has explored the contexts for the emergence of author portraiture and putative portraits of Edmund Spenser, but there are also specific reasons why Edmund Spenser may never have sat for a portrait and why we are probably unlikely to find an extant image of him. First, it would also seem that the vogue for portraits of writers to have become collectable may only have fully emerged after Spenser's death. For example, the only portrait of an English writer listed in the inventory of a major aristocratic collector John, Baron Lumley (1533–1609) in 1590, depicted Geoffrey Chaucer (along side four Italian writers, Boccaccio, Petrarch, Dante and Ariosto).[50] Second, unlike Jonson and Daniel, Spenser does not appear to have had especially stable relationships with any of the patrons he had in his life. He was supported largely by military men and administrators in Ireland where he lived almost as soon as his literary career began. Arthur, Lord Grey de Wilton (1536–93), Henry Wallop (*circa* 1531–99), and John and Thomas Norris (1547/50–97 and 1556–99), all employed Spenser, granted him land and supported him, and although some commissioned their own portraits, it seems perhaps less likely that they would have commissioned a portrait of an employee.[51] It is more likely that one of Spenser's notable female patrons might have been interested in commissioning a portrait. These included Lady Margaret Russell, Countess of Cumberland (1560–1616) and Anne Russell (1548/9–1604), widow of Ambrose Dudley, first Earl of Warwick, to whom he dedicated *The Fowre Hymnes*, published in 1596. Margaret's daughter, Lady Anne Clifford (1590–1676) later paid for Spenser's funeral monument in 1620. She was a noted reader and patron of English poetry, and later had a portrait commissioned, the Belcamp triptych, when she was fifty-three,

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[49] Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. See Cooper, *Citizen Portrait.*

[50] Catharine Macleod, Tarnya Cooper & Margaret Zoller, 'The Portraits', in Mark Evans (ed.), *The Elizabethan Age The Lumley Inventory and Pedigree* (London: The Roxburghe Club, 2010), 59–70, Appendix p. 163, No. 146.

[51] Portraits survive of Arthur, 14th Lord Grey in two private collections and in the Garter Knight procession drawing by Marcus Gheeraerts at the British Museum. A portrait of Sir John Norris is in the collection at Knole, Kent, another was sold at Christie, on 20.07.90, lot 302 and yet another is in a private collection.

showing her standing in her closet with her dog. On the shelves behind her are her books, which, along with biblical, classical and philosophical works, include those of the major Elizabethan and Jacobean poets – Daniel, Sidney, Hall, and Spenser.[52] Of all Spenser's patrons, Lady Margaret Russell, is possibly the most likely to have commissioned a portrait, if the vogue for author portraiture had even developed that early. If so, nothing has survived that is currently identifiable.

Before he achieved any sort of fame Spenser was, unsurprisingly enough, too obscure and lacking in important connections. After graduating from Cambridge he probably lived with his friend and tutor, Gabriel Harvey (1552/3–1631), and might just about have had the wealth to commission a portrait, but was undoubtedly more interested in spending what money he had on books. It is hardly surprising that no image of Harvey survives either. Moreover, Spenser was often publicly scathing about the court and the corrupt courtiers there, especially in the early 1590s, a strategy that was unlikely to attract patrons, and which may well have been a deliberate public act of defiance.[53] If we also consider that Spenser lived in Ireland, this would have made the production of a portrait even less likely as access to appropriate artists' workshops would have been limited.

As we have seen, we do have a number of reliable portraits of early seventeenth-century authors, including George Chapman, Samuel Daniel, John Fletcher, and Ben Jonson. However, only a few unusual examples survive from the late sixteenth century, most significantly the portraits of John Donne and Michael Drayton. Drayton had himself painted as Poet Laureate in 1599, the year that Spenser died, the clear message to the knowledgeable viewer being that Drayton had claimed Spenser's garland, and an obvious reason for the existence of an unusual picture.[54] Certainly the market for portraiture had expanded rapidly by the first decades of the seventeenth century and many more individuals of middling status did begin to commission their own likeness, or occasionally in the case of writers, had their portraits commissioned for display in contexts of an aristocratic collection, as appears to have been the case with Ben Jonson. It is therefore not impossible that Spenser could have sat for a portrait to be painted during his lifetime. However, all the existing evidence indicates that he would have been unlikely to do so. Indeed, even in the mid seventeenth century no reliable image of him could be found. In the decades after Spenser's death, in a growing climate of professionalization and the increasing opportunities for royal and noble patronage, Jacobean writers may have felt better able to take advantages of visible means to increase their status. It is clear that the commission of a portrait likeness was one such

[52] Martin Holmes, *Proud Northern Lady: Lady Anne Clifford, 1590–1676* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1975), 138–9; Richard T. Spence, *Lady Anne Clifford: Countess of Pembroke, Dorset and Montgomery (1590–1676)* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997), 66.

[53] See Bruce Danner, *Furious Muse: Edmund Spenser's War on Lord Burghley* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011).

[54] Cooper (ed.), *Searching for Shakespeare*, 175–91.

means, although we would be wrong to routinely expect professional Elizabethan writers such as Spenser to have done so. Given the lack of surviving evidence and the probability that no portrait will be discovered that can be securely identified as a certain likeness, it is likely that we will never know what Edmund Spenser looked like.

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