

Recreated Portrait of Edmund Spenser

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The conjectural portrait of an older Edmund Spenser at the time of his wedding is based on a purported portrait of Spenser that appeared soon after the publication of Jacob Tonson's edition of the *Faerie Queene* in 1715. The portrait was said to have been discovered in 1719 in the possession of collector John Guise by artist George Vertue. In 1727 Vertue allegedly made an engraving of the portrait, and in 1770 Benjamin Wilson created an oil portrait from the engraving. It is of the "Oxford/ Chesterfield" type, a term applied to the oil portrait after it was given to Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1771. Although numerous copies of this portrait exist, Tarnya Cooper and Andrew Hadfield have suggested in an essay on "Edmund Spenser and Elizabethan portraiture" that the Vertue portrait was a seventeenth-century fabrication rather than an original portrait of Spenser. (*Renaissance Studies* 27:3 (June 2013), 18-21.)

To create a new portrait in Photoshop, the Wilson portrait was flipped horizontally so the figure would be facing the invented portrait of Spenser's wife, Elizabeth. A new but fairly conservative collar was taken from the *Portrait of James VI and I, 1566-1625* painted in 1604 by the Antwerp-born artist John De Critz, Sergeant-painter to King James VI of Scotland after he assumed the English throne as James I, which is currently in the collection of the National Galleries of Scotland. (See http://www.nationalgalleries.org/collection/artists-a-z/C/6289/artist_name/John%20de%20Critz/record_id/2889 and

<http://www.thepicturerestorer.co.uk/events/technical-study-of-john-de-critz-the-elder/>, both accessed 11-27-2013)

The collar and beard from the James portrait were copied and applied to the portrait of Spenser. The image was then manipulated to position and size the new collar, to remove the original collar, to merge the new beard and facial color with the style of the Wilson painting, to raise the forehead line as though Spenser's hair had receded slightly, to fade the color of his skin, and to deepen the wrinkles around his eyes. These were done using a variety of tools, such as the cloning, burn, dodge, and sponge tools, the eraser, and by transforming, adjusting levels and curves, and applying filters.