



Look here upon this picture and on this

AS COUNTRY LIFE well knows (May 20, 2015) portraits that could be lifetime likenesses of William Shakespeare turn up from time to time, and they generally provoke most satisfying clamours among academics, romantics and conspiracy theorists. Two new candidates have emerged in under six months and both are currently on the market.

The first (*top left*), which is being offered by private treaty on behalf of the owner by the Somerset-based art and antiques researcher Duncan Phillips (01675 443519), is of a man aged 44 in 1608, as Shakespeare was. When removed from the probably 18th-century frame in the course of an examination by the Courtauld Institute in 2016, the stylised initials RP for Robert Peake the Elder were discovered. For at least two centuries

to 1975, this 20in by 18in portrait had been in a Yorkshire country house, where it was always held to be of Shakespeare.

There are numerous connections between Peake (about 1551–1619) and Shakespeare. He was not only Serjeant-Painter to the King, but painted scenery for the Office of the Revels, which licensed plays and was based near Shakespeare's Blackfriars theatre, and his family printing business printed engravings for Martin Droeshout, whose illustration in the First Folio, however stilted, is undoubtedly a near-lifetime likeness.

The second 17in by 22in potential Shakespeare (*top right*) is with Darnley Fine Art (www.darnleyfineart.com). It shows a younger man, but there are distinct similarities between the two (notably the left eye), and



also to the Chandos portrait in the NPG. Shakespeare was left-handed, as is this sitter.

To continue the portrait theme, the exhibition of 20 recent self-portraits by Frank Auerbach (*above left*) organised at Hazlitt Holland-Hibbert in Bury Street St James's, SW1, by his agent Frankie Rossi, is powerful and moving. In the past Mr Auerbach, now 92, has very rarely been his own model, but 'Now that I've got bags under my eyes, things are sagging, and so on, there's

more material to work with'. There are nine paintings and 11 mixed media drawings (until July 14, www.hh-h.com).

Finally, as a first taste of the new Treasure House Fair at Chelsea Hospital (June 22–26), which I will preview in the June 21 issue, here is a reminder of how good a draughtsman Augustus John could be, especially when he had a model as beautiful as *Mrs Ambrose McEvoy* (*above right*, 1907): to be shown by Offer Waterman. 