



# The True Face of William Shakespeare

*Hildegard Hammerschmidt-Hummel*

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## **The True Face of William Shakespeare** Hildegard Hammerschmidt-Hummel

Within his own lifetime, William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was praised and revered as a writer of genius. By the late 1590s he had already reached a high point of his brilliant literary career in London and was considered to be in every way the equal of great classical figures such as Nestor, Socrates, or Virgil. Almost everyone had heard of Shakespeare. Many more had seen him on stage and knew what he looked like. Indeed, students at Oxford and Cambridge were fascinated by Shakespeare's works and hung his image on their walls. However, in the decades that followed, much of this visual knowledge was lost, not least as a result of the turmoil of the English Civil War in the seventeenth century. Uncertainty developed about the poet's physical appearance which has persisted to this day.

Now Professor Hildegard Hammerschmidt-Hummel conclusively dispels this uncertainty and reveals the true face of William Shakespeare. By combining exhaustive academic research with the latest technology, and collaborating over many years with specialists from the most varied disciplines (including forensic experts from the German Federal Bureau of Criminal Investigation, doctors, physicists, 3D imaging engineers, archivists, and experts on art and literature), she has been able to prove the authenticity of the Darmstadt Shakespeare death mask and the Flower and Chandos portraits, as well as that of another, extraordinarily expressive image of Shakespeare: the Davenant bust (whose provenance can now be traced back to the early seventeenth century).

In this groundbreaking book Hildegard Hammerschmidt-Hummel offers a convincing solution to the centuries-old problem of the appearance and identity of William Shakespeare. She also answers previously open questions concerning the diseases the poet suffered from, why he abandoned his celebrated literary career prematurely, and what very probably caused his untimely death.

The True Face of William Shakespeare will fundamentally change our perception of Shakespeare as both a human being and as a writer.

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