



# Shakespeare and Elizabeth: The Meeting of Two Myths

*Helen Hackett*

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Did William Shakespeare ever meet Queen Elizabeth I? There is no evidence of such a meeting, yet for three centuries writers and artists have been provoked and inspired to imagine it. *Shakespeare and Elizabeth* is the first book to explore the rich history of invented encounters between the poet and the Queen, and examines how and why the mythology of these two charismatic and enduring cultural icons has been intertwined in British and American culture.

Helen Hackett follows the history of meetings between Shakespeare and Elizabeth through historical novels, plays, paintings, and films, ranging from well-known works such as Sir Walter Scott's *Kenilworth* and the film *Shakespeare in Love* to lesser known but equally fascinating examples. Raising intriguing questions about the boundaries separating scholarship and fiction, Hackett looks at biographers and critics who continue to delve into links between the queen and the poet. In the Shakespeare authorship controversy there have even been claims that Shakespeare was Elizabeth's secret son or lover, or that Elizabeth herself was the genius Shakespeare. Hackett uncovers the reasons behind the lasting appeal of their combined reputations, and she locates this interest in their enigmatic sexual identities, as well as in the ways they represent political tensions and national aspirations.

Considering a wealth of examples, *Shakespeare and Elizabeth* shows how central this double myth is to both elite and popular culture in Britain and the United States, and how vibrantly it is reshaped in different eras.

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