

In the Shadow of the Globe
Reviewed by Charles Allen Wyman
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This well-mounted poem cycle deals with the history, both real and created, surrounding the Globe theatre and its cast of attending actors, patrons, and others. Not surprisingly, William Shakespeare is the centerpiece around which the tale spins. And spin it does.

Cameron's poetry strikes a fine balance between the archaic trappings of the time and the modern demands of her readership. Each poem is written from the perspective of one of the Globe's hangers-on—several Burbages, a Slye or two, the “Dark Lady,” Anne Hathaway (Shakespeare's wife) and many others—and it progresses very much like a play composed of individual monologues. Cameron's language has a prosy, confessional feel, and she seldom stoops (or rises) to the often florid standard of her Bardic inspiration. The story revolves around the mostly unrequited love of Mary Burbage (a created character, sister to the historical Richard Burbage who premiered many of Shakespeare's great characters at the Globe) for the famous playwright, though given the wealth of other characters speaking here, this acts more as a binding agent than anything else.

It's a taut tale full of intrigue, playacting, love, and seamy imaginings. Cameron does a wonderful job of vaulting into her characters' skins and expressing their individual joys, peccadilloes and biases. If these characters were any rounder, they'd burst. If there's a misstep anywhere in this delightful and well-thought-out cycle of poems, it would perhaps be in a few of the narrative passages in some of the poems attributed to the character of Shakespeare himself. Occasionally, Cameron seems a touch too aware of the burden of representing in her own poetic voice one of the greatest poetic voices in history, and she seems to ever-so-slightly overfluff his imagined words. This is only an occasional issue and not a marked one; in fact, this may be as much a trick of the reader's mind rather than the poet's. Regardless, *In the Shadow of the Globe* is a fine and highly readable slice of Elizabethan England, and we recommend it wholeheartedly, without reservation.