

In the Shadow of the Globe: Where History Comes to Life
Review by Janet Buck
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While Michelle Cameron's poetry collection, *In the Shadow of the Globe*, is packed with deft references and allusions to Shakespearean history and the book will, without a doubt be studied in classrooms for decades to come, her manuscript is poignant and enlightening to every reader with a beating heart -- for she explores the entire theater of human love - its foiled plans, its powerful longings, and sometimes lucky resolutions of bliss.

The few times I taught Shakespeare in an Introduction to Literature course I was always reaching for a way to make the passion of Shakespeare more relevant to young souls who would rather be slugging Coke and chewing on French fries than pouring over couplets and answering questions about the purpose of an "aside." I wish I'd had Cameron's book in hand, for she proves the everyday quests for human understanding, compassion -- the lust for love aren't ancient syllabic entreaties, but simply part of the ebb and flow of our lives.

The opening poem of *In the Shadow of the Globe*, "My Father, Dreamer, Builder" is a piercing tale of human misery that every child who was ever mistreated or ignored cannot refuse to be moved by. Cameron's words strike like lightning bolts:

Under Father's splintering eye
I learned to move, fast, fast,
bring what was wanted,
be quiet, watchful,
wait for love.

Even her purposeful pauses within the short lines deftly articulate the narrator's insecurity and the longing for adulation and approval, the tightrope and the broken glass we all must walk across.

I was also fascinated by a poem Cameron calls "Complaint." The piece is based on a letter from Anne Hathaway to William Shakespeare and this poem culls the very vivid and frequent experience of writers everywhere, most of whom have learned the hard and bitter way that writing may bring sprinkles of praise, but it rarely buys a loaf of bread:

Don't write to us of poetry,
playhouses, Southampton,
London, the court.
We can't eat your tales.

One recurring image/symbol in Cameron's work is that of fruit and wine. I found her treatment of it fascinating on a number of levels. "In Orange Girl," the subject of the poem holds a Seville and sniffs the "heavy, lacy odor." It stands for the infamous better side of the tracks, a life she is aspiring to - yet fraught with complex dangers of its own.

she wants the part of Juliet
oh Romeo, Romeo
she cries, silent,
her mouth an o orb'd fruit,
her globed wordlessness
timed precisely
with the call of the boy
draped in lacy garb

Again, we have the "any girl" and "any man" staring in the face of a wish. At other points in the book, Cameron pins down the cloud of alcohol as an insidious ghost attached to all too many family trees. Under the guise of merrymaking, booze removes us from the cares of the world, but leaves the tragedy in place - what Cameron exquisitely terms "the panting chaos underneath." *In the Shadow of the Globe* is moving poetry about the human condition, both present and historical. As a writer, Cameron knows they cannot be truly separated. As a poet, she is to be praised for both her mastery of great literature and the depth of her own unique voice.