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HOMING

Shevaun Cooley

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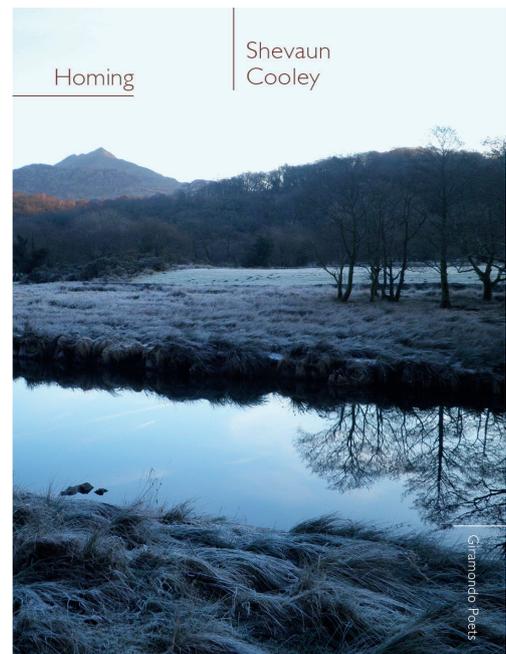
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Shevaun Cooley was born and raised in the south-west of Western Australia, but has been drawn ceaselessly to the landscapes of North Wales, where she lived for a time in her early twenties. The poems are written out of the questions this divided orientation raises – about what constitutes a home, and how we might find our way there. Animals have an ability to home that seems both biological and intuitive. Do we have this compass too? In the poems it is the sudden appearance of wild creatures, the shifting waters of sea or lake or river, the way light falls over the scene, which points to what we are driven to hold, but which ultimately evades us. Other material, from the poet's own life – including, inevitably, heartbreak – makes its way into the poems as well, since many of these emotions arise from a sense of being unhomed or unsettled. There is also a fine intelligence at work, calling in mythical resonances, the testimony of poets and scientists, and the resources of language, to sharpen the poet's alertness to her surroundings

Shevaun Cooley is a poet, essayist and climber. Her poems have been published in *Cordite*, *Island*, *Poetry Wales*, *Meanjin*, *Southerly* and *The Best Australian Poems 2009*, and have been shortlisted for the Newcastle Poetry Prize and the University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize. She has a PhD in Creative Writing from Edith Cowan University, where she now teaches as an Adjunct Lecturer.



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Author's note

In this collection I found myself writing poems in parts – particularly in cases where poems rely on creatures to carry them. Perhaps because a bearing across had to occur – a leap in the mind from one section, one impression, to the next. If the creature cannot be held (and it cannot), then we need to approach it from the side. It's the way of hunting, to wait and leap, and when you have failed – and in poetry, we always fail a little bit – you turn and try again.

It does not seem to me to be a coincidence, I should add, that 'to translate' should have its origins in the Latin *translatus*, 'carried over'; that 'metaphor' comes from the Greek *metapherein*, 'to bear across'; or that enjambment comes from the French *enjamber* 'to stride over.' In poetry, in writing, there are so many things we are trying to bring together. The poetic leap is just one action that crosses the rifts of language. That is, it tries to cross. It's as much about the effort, the reaching, as it is the success.

That sought-for, longed-for thing, of which we seem to see only the coat-tails. This might be the necessary result of writing about longing.

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