

by Elke Cremer
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Fiction

Going Home

Heimgehen

review

In her striking debut novel, ‘Going Home’, poet Elke Cremer uses a harrowing act of public violence – a mass shooting in a café – to create a fragmented group portrait of modern life. Cremer’s tender, haunting work will appeal to fans of Claire Keegan.

The book is structured as a series of interlocking narratives that orbit the incident, with each vignette assigned a date and time. These episodes move through the backstories of characters whose lives collide on the day of the shooting. We meet a gay couple who inadvertently find themselves in the line of fire after returning to the café to collect some forgotten coffee beans, and a trio of friends who share a dark secret involving the cover-up of a woman’s death. Central to the narrative is an artist who is shot and wounded, and whose journey toward recovery provides the emotional anchor of the book.

Cremer’s background in poetry is evident in her luminous, precisely crafted prose. The narrative often lingers on details that afford insights into the characters’ internal lives. One of the most moving threads involves the artist’s estranged father, who reconnects with his daughter during her hospitalisation. His narrative is a complex blend of guilt over his neglectful behaviour during his daughter’s childhood and a desperate, heart-wrenching attempt to provide the emotional support he once failed to give.

The novel reaches a spectacular crescendo in its final pages, delivered as an aria of consciousness from the recovering victim. As she drifts between trauma-induced delirium and clarity, she imagines a recapitulation of the lives that crossed paths that day, the dying and the survivors alike. This ecstatic narrative serves as a powerful celebration of her own survival and a testament to the universal human threads of love, friendship, and family.

'Going Home' offers a timely perspective on a form of violence that sadly transcends international borders. Cremer has created a closely observed study of human behaviour that will appeal to readers of high-concept literary fiction who value psychological depth and stylistic originality over conventional action. It is an impactful debut that marks the arrival of a significant new voice in German fiction.

Find out more: https://doerlemann.ch/produkt/heimgehen/

press quotes

> *'Heimgehen ('Going Home') is a portrait of a day and the lives of people who happen to be in the same place at the wrong time. Mass murder has become a feature of modern life. Here Elke Cramer has taken this aspect of modernity as her narrative impulse, not to showcase the violence, but to tenderly and sympathetically show the lives of those affected.'*

Paul David Young

about the author



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Elke Cremer was born in Ludwigshafen in 1975 and studied Literature and Musicology in Freiburg, Munich and Florence. She works as an author and scriptwriter and lives in Berlin. She is a recipient of the Baden-Württemberg Art Foundation's annual literature scholarship and the GEDOK Heidelberg Poetry Sponsorship for her literary work. Her publications to date include the poetry booklet *Linien aus*

Bienen (‘Lines of Bees’), the poetry cycle *Die Mandarinenorakel* (‘The Mandarin Oracle’, with Eva Brunner) and, in 2022, the poetry collection *Aufriss ohne Häuser* (‘Elevation without Buildings’). She won the German Audio Film Award in 2017, 2022 and 2023.

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