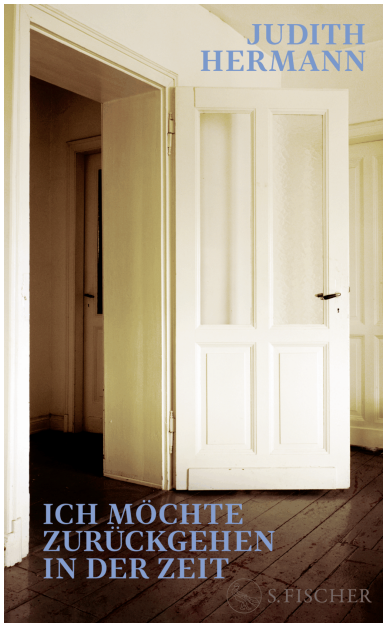


by Judith Hermann
S. Fischer
February 2026 / 160pp
Fiction

I Want to Go Back in Time

Ich möchte zurück gehen in die Zeit

review

'I Want to Go Back in Time' is a slim but profoundly evocative memoir that examines the unreliable, fragmentary nature of family memory. Hermann is particularly curious about her grandfather, who was a member of the SS and stationed in Radom, Poland during WWII. She writes about the longing for a complete narrative despite our forgetting and repressing and the role of the writer in the search for meaning.

The book is elegantly structured in three distinct parts, linked by Hermann's own search for a narrative thread. It begins in Radom, where Hermann spends a month attempting to trace her grandfather's history as a member of the SS. Guided only by a single photograph from 1941 and the fading, often reluctant memories of her octogenarian mother, Hermann finds herself at a standstill. Her mother grows increasingly annoyed by these inquiries into what was long an 'open secret', accusing her daughter of mining the past for art. Hermann captures the poignant solitude of the writer, literally putting old photographs under a magnifying glass, waiting for a story that never quite materialises.

The focus then shifts to Naples, where Hermann stays with her sister's family. Here, the investigation into her grandfather's difficult legacy is thwarted by the pleasantries of domestic life; difficult topics are avoided in front of the children, and the truth remains submerged beneath hikes and family meals. The final section, 'Tidslomme',

recounts the bizarre, temporary disappearance of her husband's parents, who vanished on a short trip only to reappear weeks later, having been away on an unexplained visit to Poland. This story is a blank space in the family history that remains empty to this day.

Hermann's signature minimalist style has never been sharper than in this quiet masterpiece of the unsaid. Eschewing tidy resolutions, she instead invites the reader into the gaps of her family's past, framing our hunger for a complete narrative as a universal longing. 'I Want to Go Back in Time' is a sophisticated, self-reflective journey through the 20th century's longest shadows – a must-read for anyone who knows that the most powerful stories are the ones that remain unfinished.

Find out more:
https://www.fischerverlage.de/verlag/rights/book/judith-hermann-ich-moechte-zurueckgehen-in-der-zeit-9783103977646

about the author

Judith Hermann was born in Berlin in 1970. Her debut short story collection *Summerhouse, Later* (tr. Margot Bettauer Dembo, Harper Collins, 1998) was extremely well received. It was followed in 2003 by the collection *Nothing But Ghosts* (tr. Margot Bettauer Dembo, Fourth Estate, 2005), from which several stories were adapted for film in 2007. In 2009, she published *Alice* (tr. Margot Bettauer Dembo, Clerkenwell Press, 2011), five short stories that received international acclaim. Her first novel, *Where Love Begins* (tr. Margot Bettauer Dembo, Clerkenwell Press, 2016), came out in 2014. It was followed in 2016 by the short story collection *Letti Park* (tr. Margot Bettauer Dembo, Clerkenwell Press, 2018), which won the Danish Blixen Prize for Short Stories. Hermann has received numerous awards for her work, including the Kleist Prize and the Friedrich Hölderlin Prize. Her novel *Daheim* ('Home') was published in spring 2021. It was nominated for the Leipzig Book Fair Prize and received the Bremen Literature Prize in 2022.

Previous works: *Sommerhaus, später* (1998) *Nichts als Gespenster* (2003) *Alice* (2009) *Aller Liebe Anfang* (2014) *Lettipark* (2016) *Daheim* (2021) *Wir hätten uns alles gesagt* (2023) – alles bei S.Fischer

Previous translations: *Summerhouse, Later* (2001, HarperCollins) *Nothing but Ghosts* (2005, Fourth Estate) *Alice* (2011, The Clerkenwell Press) *Where Love Begins (*2016, The Clerkenwell

Press) *Letti Park* (2018, The Clerkenwell Press) *We Would Have Told Each Other Everything* (2025, Granta Books; 2026 FSG)

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