



by Navid Kermani
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Non-Fiction

In the Other Direction, Now: My Journey Through East Africa

In die andere Richtung jetzt: Eine Reise durch Ostafrika

review

Navid Kermani's 'In the Other Direction Now' is a remarkable work of literary non-fiction that follows the author through a vast arc of East African countries, charting the emotional, environmental, and political fault lines that define this region today. Originally written as a series of travel reports for the German weekly, *Die Zeit*, the collection of essays is shaped by Kermani's empathetic yet unflinching perspective.

Kermani is an acclaimed writer already well known in the English-speaking world for books such as *Upheaval: The Refugee Trek through Europe* and *Along the Trenches: A Journey through Eastern Europe to Isfahan* (Polity, 2017 and 2020, tr. Tony Crawford). This new volume is a continuation of his documentation of global peripheries with literary sensitivity. The writing here is reflective without ever being moralising, and intellectually rigorous without academic pretension. Kermani seeks not to interpret Africa for us, but to learn from it: its history, music, and multiplicity. In the process, he offers a counterpoint to colonial clichés and Western ignorance.

The book moves through regions deeply affected by the climate crisis, war, and postcolonial neglect: southern Madagascar, the Comoros, Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, and finally

Sudan. These are places where, as Kermani observes, global fault lines converge: from the devastating impact of climate change and COVID-19 to the rising influence of China and the consequences of the Ukraine war. Kermani offers specific, grounded accounts of people and places. He contextualises suffering within global inequalities – not as a product of some intrinsic African deficiency, but as part of interconnected systems shaped by the Global North as much as local governance.

Music emerges as a unifying thread throughout the book. Christian hymns, Sufi dances and Sudanese jazz become symbols of resilience and transformation, cultural links that bind communities across conflict, faith, and history. Every individual Kermani encounters is named in full, be they jazz musicians, former guerilla leaders, or religious figures – a hallmark of the respect with which Kermani treats all those he encounters.

Kermani's perspective as a German Muslim of Iranian descent enriches his reflections. 'In the Other Direction Now' is not just a travelogue, but a profoundly humanist work. Readers interested in contemporary global affairs, postcolonial realities, and empathetic journalism will find it enthralling reading.

Find out more:

<https://www.chbeck.de/kermani-richtung-jetzt/product/36896179>

about the author



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Navid Kermani is a qualified Orientalist and works as a freelance writer in Cologne. He has been awarded the Kleist Prize, the Joseph Breitbach Prize, the Friedrich Hölderlin Prize, the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade and, most recently, the Thomas Mann Prize for his work.

Previous work: *Ungläubiges Staunen über das Christentum* Verlag C.H.Beck(2023); *Wenn sich unsere Herzen gleich öffnen*, Verlag C.H.Beck (2025); *Gott ist schön*. Verlag C.H.Beck.(2018)

Previous translations: *Wonder Beyond Belief: on Christianity*. Polity Press (2017);

The Upheavel: the Refugee Track through Europe. Polity Press (2017); *Along the Trenches: A Journey through Eastern Europe to Isfahan.* Polity Press (2019)

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