



## Eurozine News Item

### Literatur im Herbst: Dilemma 89

6–8 November, Odeon Theatre, Vienna

"Dilemma 89" is the topic of this year's annual "Literatur im Herbst", hosted by the Alte-Schmiede in cooperation with *Wespennest* from 6 to 8 November in Vienna.



"Central Europe, the glamorous misery of intellectuals, the end of 'Left' and 'Right', whether the novel is *the* European literary form — with the fall of the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall, it seemed that what prominent authors and intellectuals had been discussing for years had suddenly been swept aside," writes **Erich Klein** in his introduction to this year's *Literatur im Herbst*, topic **Dilemma 89**.

"History returned with unexpected force, accelerating at such a rate that paradoxical ideologemes were created and quickly discarded.

The notion of 'the end of history' was refuted by experience. Since then, the mainstream has been subjected to the contradictory pronouncements of the economy of attention and the logic of scandal. Postmodernism, globalization, sustainability — buzzwords follow in rapid succession. In literature, every season *the* novel of the year is announced; one canon chases off the other; new authors need to be enrolled. The poles of the short European twentieth century, Auschwitz and the Gulag, have long since entered literary trash. The charge that in the 'new' literatures of Europe, only the texts and not the contexts are read, is nevertheless unfair..."

**Speakers include:** Daniela Dahn, Josef Haslinger, Herta Müller, **Wolfgang Müller-Funk**, **Timothy Snyder**, Olga Tokarczuk, Ottó Tolnai, Jáchym Topol and Richard Wagner.

Full [programme details](#) of "Literatur im Herbst".



"Dilemma '89" is also the title of *Wespennest 156* (reviewed in Eurozine [here](#)), where Daniela Dahn delivers a retort to the "two dictatorships" thesis that posits equivalence between Nazi Germany and the GDR.

Immediately after 1989, there was great will in the GDR to uncover collaborators with the regime, writes Dahn. "Yet when eastern Germans noticed that the victors were reducing the image of the GDR to terms such as

'criminal state' and 'totalitarian dictatorship' [...] few still wanted to take part in the debate."

As a journalist in the 1980s, Dahn belonged to a semi-official, regime-critical subculture and in 1989 led a committee to develop a new press law in the GDR. "However, the western media deprived us of the fun of 'ridiculing half-truths with ruthless rigour'. [...] Overnight we felt challenged to point out nuances. However revolutions, even peaceful ones, aren't the time for balanced arguments. [...] The privatization of an east German media in the process of liberating itself is one reason why startlingly simplistic notions of history have become ingrained today."

The [table of contents](#) of *Wespennest* 156.

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