



by Helmut Böttiger  
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## We Exchange Dark Words *Wir sagen uns Dunkles*

### review

*We Exchange Dark Words* is a gripping and authoritative introduction to these two outstanding poets as well as to the historical circumstances of their influential oeuvres.

Ingeborg Bachmann and Paul Celan met in Vienna in the spring of 1948, when they were both still young and unknown poets. They embarked upon a passionate love affair which, despite its brevity, shaped their lives and writing until the early 1960s, during which time they became two of Europe's most important literary figures. Böttiger's book follows this pair of fragile souls in their personal lives, including their failed attempts to live together, as well as in their literary journeys. He offers an insightful portrayal of the poets' personalities, of their literary entourage and, more generally, of the reshaping of the intellectual milieu after the end of the Second World War.

This fascinating book has a guaranteed international readership, as both poets are widely read in English translation. Böttiger's knack for combining biographical information with literary analysis, together with the vivid picture he paints of post-war Europe, cements this title's appeal.

## press quotes

*The love story of these two poets is one of the most dramatic and fateful episodes in German literature after 1945.*

*– Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*

## about the author

Helmut Böttiger has served as the literature editor of the daily Frankfurter Rundschau and other newspapers. Since 2002 he has worked as a freelance writer and critic in Berlin. He was awarded the 1996 Ernst Robert Curtius Promotion Prize for Essay Writing, the 2012 Alfred Kerr Prize for Literary Criticism, and the Prize of the Leipzig Book Fair 2013.

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Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt

Verlagsgruppe Random House

Neumarkter Str. 28, 81673 Munich, Germany

Contact: Gesche Wendebourg

Tel: +49 894 136 3470

E-Mail: [gesche.wendebourg@randomhouse.de](mailto:gesche.wendebourg@randomhouse.de)

[www.randomhouse.de](http://www.randomhouse.de)

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