



by Julia Schoch

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Fiction

 Ranked #7 on the Spiegel Hardcover Bestseller List

The Couple of the Century

Das Liebespaar des Jahrhunderts

review

The second part of a loose trilogy entitled 'Biography of a Woman', *Das Liebespaar des Jahrhunderts* stands alone as an autobiographical novel chronicling the end of a thirty-year relationship. In the same cool, unfussy prose displayed in its predecessor, *Das Vorkommnis*, this first-person narrative is a carefully crafted exploration of the mundane details that constitute daily life as a couple, set against the backdrop of socio-political changes in East Germany. Julia Schoch's astute observations and characteristic lightness of touch conspire to create an extremely readable novel that will appeal to fans of Annie Ernaux.

Opening with an attention-grabbing statement, 'I'm leaving you', *Das Liebespaar des Jahrhunderts* is narrated by an unnamed woman addressing her partner of thirty years. They have two children – about whom most details are omitted – yet, after half a lifetime together, the narrator is dissatisfied and planning to end their relationship. Her partner, we sense, may see things differently, though we only have access to his thoughts in what the narrator is able to observe of his reactions. Schoch's decision to write from such an intimate first-person perspective and to focus on the small details of life, rather than milestone events, gives *Das Liebespaar des Jahrhunderts* a timeless quality and ensures it will be universally relatable.

Looking back over three decades, from youthful infatuation to the challenges of bringing up children, maintaining a home, falling out of

love and gradually establishing a peaceful yet humdrum co-existence, the narrator sets her relationship's highs and lows within the context of East Germany's ideological collapse and rebuilding. This mirroring effect adds historical and social weight to the novel; it gives rise to questions about where world events and personal experience intersect, the values and ideals we pass on to our children, and how something as "ordinary" as a relationship can outlast governments, revolutions, even entire political regimes.

A tribute to love even as it chronicles its end, *Das Liebespaar des Jahrhunderts* also draws attention to the process of writing in an autofictional style that is very of-the-minute. Further themes include the overlap between memory and fiction, the human need to attach significance to our experiences, and the weariness so many people feel at the rapid changes taking place in the world. Quiet yet memorable, laced with gentle humour and displaying great care in its use of language, Julia Schoch's compact novel is a wise and touching meditation on relationships.

Rights sold: The Netherlands, Singel; Spain, Maeva; Denmark, Klara W.

press quotes

A great book about love and what it costs to see it through. I think it could become a classic.

ZDF, Das Literarische Quartett, Eva Menasse

Where has love, that grand feeling, gone? Julia Schoch tells the story of its evaporation through a breathtaking reduction. A stunning literary achievement.

ZDF, Das Literarische Quartett, Thea Dorn

Julia Schoch has once again succeeded in exploring the tiniest of upsets (...) with intelligence and originality. (...) Rarely, if ever has anyone examined so unflinchingly the emotional minutiae of the

estrangement of two lovers.

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Sandra Kegel

The most honest book about love and failure and unbearable expectations that I've read in a long time. (...) It is about us in this century, trying to substitute desperate love for some kind of loss of meaning.

Süddeutsche Zeitung, Elke Heidenreich

Picking apart the most personal of experiences with forensic attention to detail, the novel describes a pain that is universal.

Der Tagesspiegel, Lena Schneider

Julia Schoch eloquently shows how even the greatest of loves can evaporate into thin air. (...) Wise, true and essential reading.

Die Zeit Literary Supplement, Marie Serah Ebcinoglu

about the author



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Julia Schoch was born in 1974 and works in Potsdam as a freelance author and translator of French. She has received countless nominations and awards, for both her writing and her translations. Her novel *Das Vorkommnis* (The Incident) was awarded the Schubart-Literaturpreis in 2023. She received the 2022 German Schiller Foundation Award for her literary works.

Previous works: *Der Körper des Salamanders*, Piper (2001); *Verabredungen mit Mattock*, Piper (2004); *Mit der Geschwindigkeit des Sommers*, Piper

(2009); *Selbstportrait mit Bonaparte*, Piper
(2012); *Schöne Seelen und Komplizen*,
Piper (2018); *Das Vorkommnis*, dtv (2022)

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Contact:

Andrea Seibert, seibert.andrea@dtv.de

dtv Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG

Tumblingerstr. 21

80337 München

Tel.: 089 / 38167 – 0

Fax: 089 / 34 64 28

E-Mail: verlag@dtv.de