

## A Fine Couple

**Gert Loschütz**

**Simon Pare, Translator**

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Broken dreams and family bonds are at the center of Gert Loschütz's novel *A Fine Couple*.

After World War II, Georg and Herta ended up in East Germany. Herta had been looking for a way to escape the confines of her hometown; she dreamed of moving to Berlin. Georg searched for somewhere to settle down after the army, without a place to call home. Their opposing dreams pulled their marriage in opposite directions.

Later, a letter from Georg's friend in West Germany forced the family to flee. But life in West Germany proved to be harder than Herta and Georg expected. The rift in their marriage widened into a chasm. Philipp watched as his parents became eccentric with age, indifferent to each other's existence. Though they did not file for divorce, they spent years estranged from one another. In an assisted living facility, Herta began to bolt her door each night. Elsewhere, Georg retired to his attic to stare out the window.

After Georg and Herta die, it falls to Philipp to clean up their belongings. He finds a packet of letters that initiate his quest to learn why his parents drifted apart. As Philipp digs into his parents' history, he discovers their resentments and broken dreams. But the bond between them remained; their eccentric habits were disguised acts of longing and unbroken marriage vows.

Simon Pare's translation from the original German holds together a story that is at times obscure, and in which people are introduced in the manner of afterthoughts. The expansive narration weaves in and out of time and shifting borders, with the significance of events explained only in part.

*A Fine Couple* is a touching novel about unbroken vows and family bonds in Cold War-era Germany.

ERIKA HARLITZ KERN (November / December 2022)

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