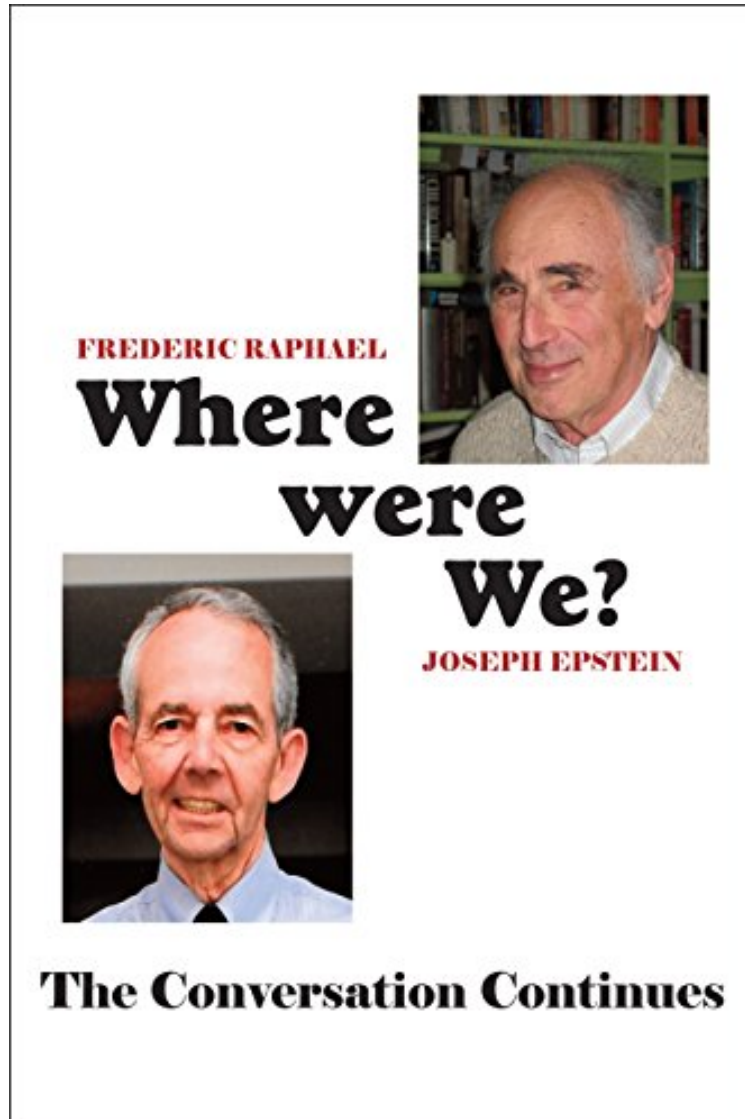


Where Were We?: The Conversation Continues

Frederic Raphael, Joseph Epstein

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Frederic Raphael, Joseph Epstein : Where Were We?: The Conversation Continues before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Where Were We?: The Conversation Continues:

Frederic Raphael, the English novelist, screenwriter, and man of letters, and Joseph Epstein, the American essayist, short-story writer, and literary critic, exchanged e-mails sporadically over the years, usually commenting on each other's various writings. Then one day in 2009, Raphael wrote to Epstein to suggest that, since they enjoyed a

benevolence toward each other unusual among literary men, they begin an exchange of e-mail correspondence on a regular basis. His thought was that, at the end of a year or so, the result might be an interesting book. Epstein, who had long admired Raphael's writing, agreed. The two men had never met, nor had they even spoken over the phone. Their friendship was conducted entirely online. Each week they exchanged e-mails of roughly 2,000 words. They discovered a great many things about each other they hadn't previously known. They shared, for example, a common birthplace in Chicago, where Raphael was born, though his family moved to England in 1938, and his education after that was exclusively English. Each man belongs to that dolorous fraternity of those who have buried a child. Their literary tastes vary, though not widely, since both grew up admiring the great modernist writers and both had an enduring love for Greek and Roman culture. Both men share a fundamental agreement about what, in artistic and intellectual realms, is serious. Raphael and Epstein are artists who happen also to be intellectuals. The result is that few subjects are off limits to them. They are of an age when they have long ceased to worry about their reputations. Wherever else they may look, it is not over their shoulders. Candor reinforced by comedy is the reigning note of *Where Were We?* as it was of *Distant Intimacy*, their earlier volume of e-mail correspondence. Writing about other writers, actors, politics, the movies, intellectual fashions, the writing life, and much else, both men say precisely what they think, and say it in high style. Readers may or may not agree with their strong views, but they will never find their thoughts other than fascinating.