



The Force of Things: A Marriage in War and Peace

Alexander Stille

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A masterpiece of literary memory—a powerful exploration of the intersections of family, history, and memory

"One evening in May 1948, my mother went to a party in New York with her first husband and left it with her second, my father." So begins the passionate and stormy union of Mikhail Kamenetzki, aka Ugo Stille, one of Italy's most celebrated journalists, and Elizabeth Bogert, a beautiful and charming young woman from the Midwest.

The Force of Things follows two families across the twentieth century—one starting in czarist Russia, the other starting in the American Midwest—and takes them across revolution, war, fascism, and racial persecution, until they collide at mid-century. Their immediate attraction and tumultuous marriage is part of a much larger story: the mass migration of Jews from fascist-dominated Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. It is a micro-story of that moment of cross-pollination that reshaped much of American culture and society. Theirs was an uneasy marriage between Europe and America, between Jew and WASP; their differences were a key to their bond yet a source of constant strife.

Alexander Stille's *The Force of Things* is a powerful, beautifully written work with the intimacy of a memoir, the pace and readability of a novel, and the historical sweep and documentary precision of nonfiction writing at its best. It is a portrait of people who are buffeted about by large historical events, who try to escape their origins but find themselves in the grip of the force of things.

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